the weekly
Standard

NOVEMBER 1 / NOVEMBER 8, 2004

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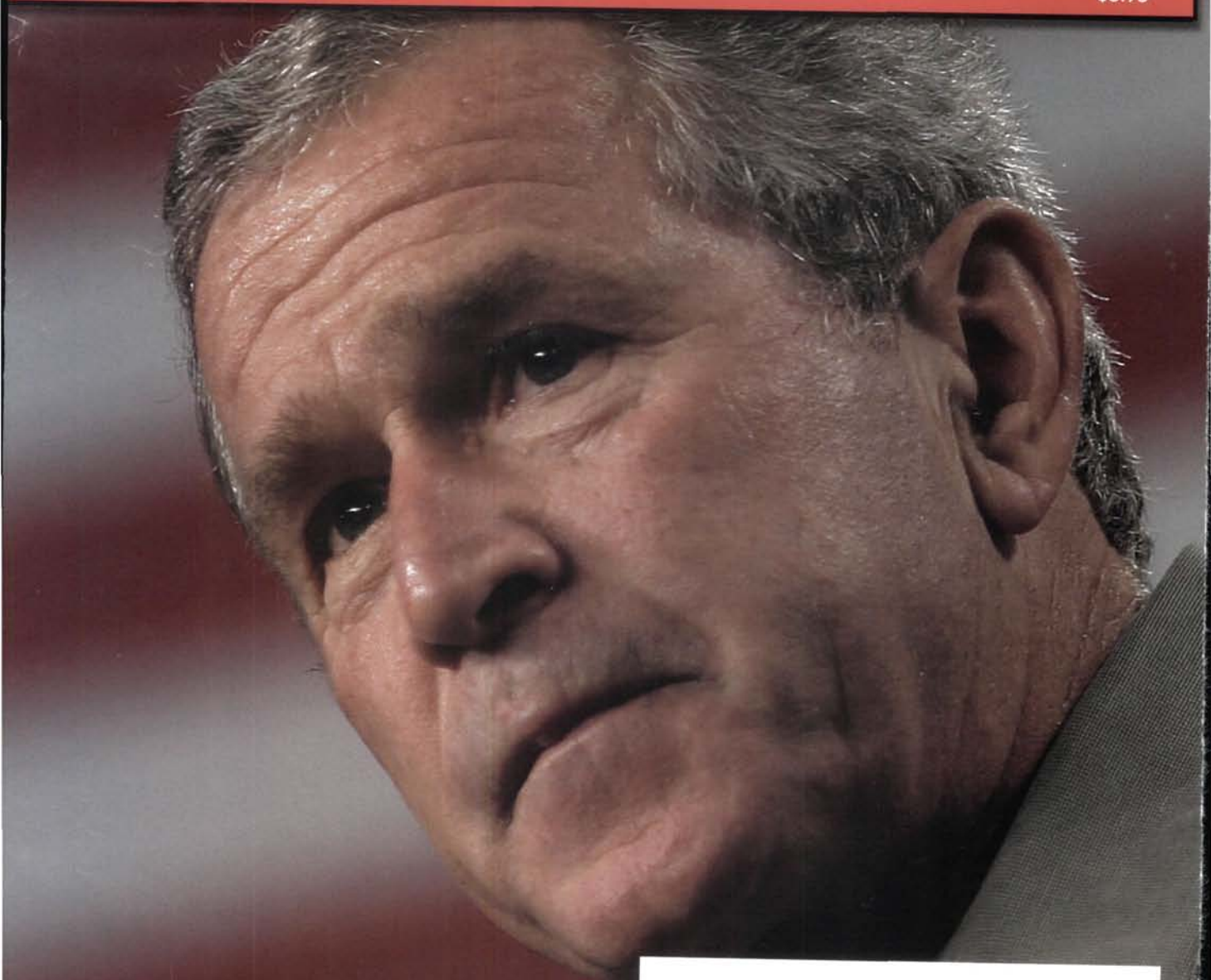

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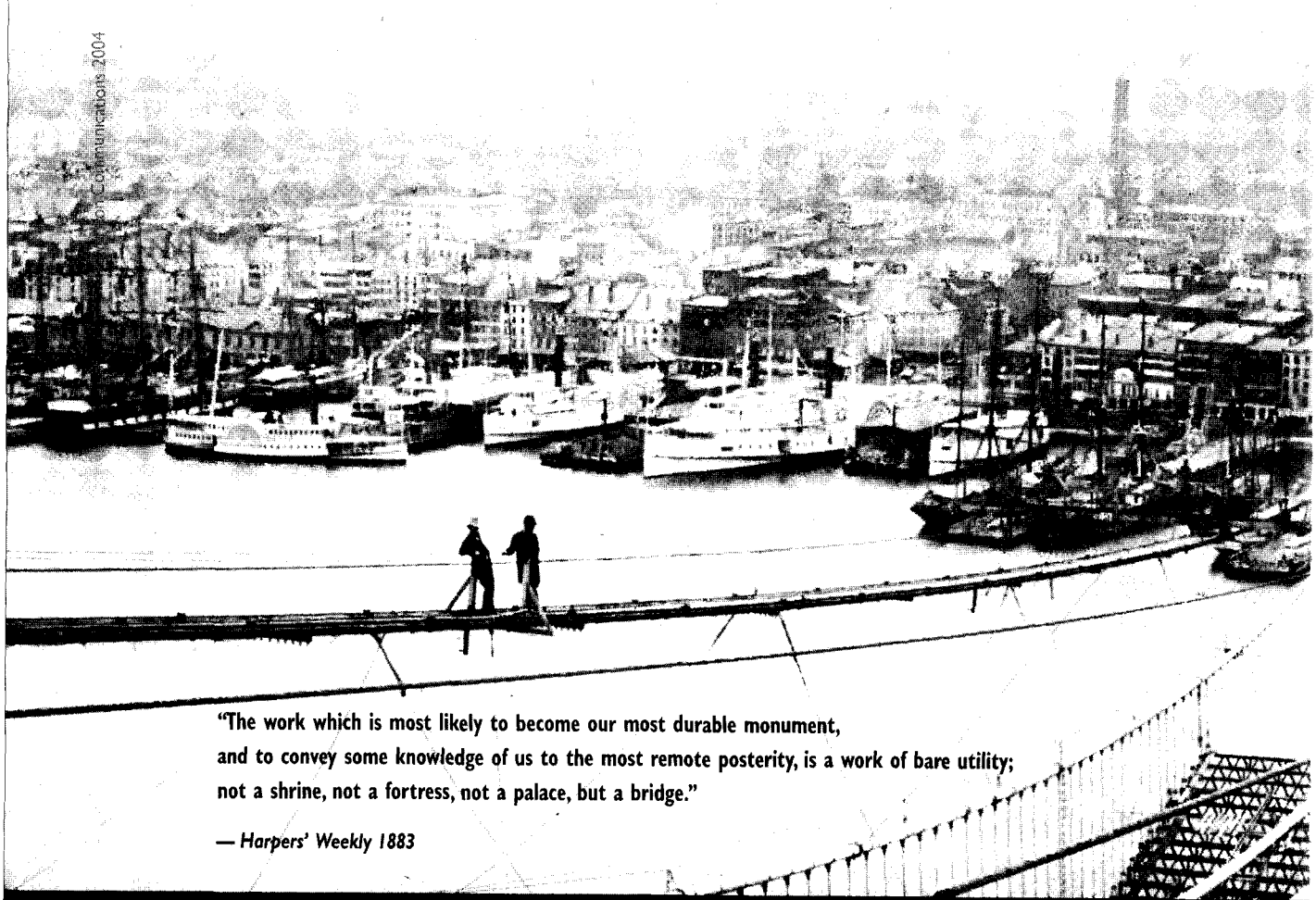

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"The work which is most likely to become our most durable monument, and to convey some knowledge of us to the most remote posterity, is a work of bare utility; not a shrine, not a fortress, not a palace, but a bridge."

— Harpers' Weekly 1883

WE'RE BUILDING AMERICA'S BROAD

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THE ENDGAME
by Fred Barnes

JUDGING KERRY
by Jeffrey Bell & Frank Cannon

THE MYTH OF THE CATHOLIC VOTER
by Joseph Bottum

VOTING PREFERENCES
by Terry Eastland

THE 9/11 ELECTION
by William Kristol

STUPID CELEBRITY TRICKS
by Matt Labash

A REFERENDUM ON NEOCONSERVATISM?
by Tod Lindberg

VIETNAM POSTSCRIPT
by Joshua Muravchik

COLORADO NIGHTMARE
by James Piereson

MONEY MATTERS
by Irwin M. Stelzer

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THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

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Abu Yankee Al-Doodle

Jimmy Carter was on MSNBC's *Hardball* early last week, ostensibly to promote the new paperback edition of his widely panned 2003 novel, *The Hornet's Nest*, a Revolutionary War tale set in the Carolinas and Georgia. There's what appears to be a great lot of library-culled research in the book; it was seven years in the writing, Carter notes in his acknowledgments. So *Hardball* host Chris Matthews was curious whether the former president—"as an historian now and studying the Revolutionary War"—thought there might these days be something especially relevant about that subject. Specifically, about "the Revolutionary War as . . . [an] insurgency against a powerful British force," Matthews wondered whether President Carter saw "any parallels between the fighting we did on our side and the fighting that is going on in Iraq today?"

In other words: Whaddya think? Is Abu Musab al Zarqawi sorta like George Washington?

In response to which Jimmy Carter—who is just about the most embarrassing American alive, when you get right down to it—replied: Yes.

"One parallel," Mr. Carter began, "is that the Revolutionary War, more than any other war up until recently, has been the most bloody war we've fought." THE SCRAPBOOK can't see how there's any other way to parse this sentence; near as we can tell, the former president is here suggesting that more American soldiers have been killed or wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom than in any other military engagement since the British surrendered at Yorktown. And we've looked it up: He's right about that—except for the Mexican War, the Korean War, Vietnam, World War I, the Civil War, and World War II.

But wait, there's more. "I think another parallel [with Iraq]," Carter continued, "is that in some ways the Revolutionary War could have been avoided. It was an unnecessary war. Had the British Parliament been a little more sensitive to the colonials' really legitimate complaints and requests the war could have been avoided completely, and of course now we would have been a free country now as is Canada and India and Australia, having gotten our independence in a nonviolent way."

Indeed, both Canada and Australia secured formal legal independence from Great Britain without a single shot being fired: the former in 1982, the latter in 1986. India achieved its freedom even earlier, in 1947, amid a hideous and protracted civil war that killed two million people. But hey, who's counting? ♦

We Report, You Decide

"The president has demanded unquestioning faith from his followers, his staff, his senior aides and his kindred in the Republican Party. Once he makes a decision—often swiftly, based on a creed or moral position—he expects complete faith in its rightness. . . . Bush's intolerance of doubters has, if anything, increased, and few dare to question him now. A writ of infallibility—a premise beneath the powerful Bushian certainty that has, in many ways, moved mountains—is not just for public consumption: it has guided the inner life of the White House."

—Story by Ron Suskind, *New York Times Magazine*, Sunday, October 17

"Mr. Bush, more than most recent presidents, has tolerated—even encouraged—a constant battle in his administration over how to shape its approach to the world."

—Story by David E. Sanger, *New York Times* "Week in Review," same day

What Would Lindbergh Do?

The Presbyterian Church (USA) currently has a 24-person delegation touring the Middle East. And one stop they made on October 17 has already caused a bit of controversy: The group visited a prison run by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and then held a joint press conference with one Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, that terrorist organization's regional capo. Nasrallah used his time before the cameras to denounce President Bush. Presbyterian Elder Ronald Stone then thanked him for it.

"We treasure the precious words of Hezbollah and your expression of goodwill towards the American people," Stone said, referring, remember, to an outfit responsible for the 1983 murder of 241 U.S. Marines in their Beirut barracks. "Also," Stone went on, "we praise your initiative for dialogue and mutual understanding." And "we cherish these statements that bring us closer to you." And—here comes the kicker—"as an elder of our church, I'd like to say that according to my recent experience, relations and conversations with Islamic leaders are a lot easier than dealings and dialogue with Jewish leaders."

Got that? Mr. Stone thinks the head of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon is a more reasonable man than any of those "Jewish leaders" he's previously met.

Back at Presbyterian church headquarters in Louisville, Ky., officials who'd initially done their damnedest to duck the issue altogether, finally, late last week, issued a press release criticizing their delegation's meeting with Hezbollah as "misguided, at best," and calling certain "comments attributed to Presby-

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terians"—no specific mention was made of Elder Stone—"reprehensible."

Amen to that. ♦

In Other Anti-Semitism News

Issues involving Jews, Israel, and terrorism continue to roil the campus of Duke University, which recently hosted a Palestine Solidarity Movement conference involving certain groups and individuals who have refused to condemn violence against Israeli civilians. In fact, things seem actually to have gotten worse since that conference packed up and left the school on October 17. And the school's student-run newspaper, the *Chronicle*, seems largely to blame—because the very next day the *Chronicle* decided to run an op-ed column by Duke senior Philip Kurian entitled, simply and ominously, "The Jews."

Mr. Kurian was unhappy about criticism leveled against the conference by "the powerful Jewish establishment." And Mr. Kurian was not too happy about "the Jews" themselves, as a matter of fact. For one thing, "Jews enjoy shocking overrepresentation" on American college campuses, he wrote. Also, unlike any genuinely disadvantaged minority group, Jews are able to blend into the general population, all stealthy-like: "Jews can renounce their difference by taking off the yarmulke." And so on. Mr. Kurian is a nasty piece of work. And, as we say, many people at Duke are now quite hot and bothered over him—and over the *Chronicle*'s decision to give him space, as well.

Chronicle editor Karen Hauptman defends that decision, though in retrospect she might have chosen to "edit some of [Kurian's] language" or use "an alternate headline." On balance, "I believe we were right in printing the column," Hauptman concludes. "To not print the column because the opinion presented is offensive would be to ignore a debate that is present around us. . . . [E]ven if the *Chronicle* had rejected the column, the ideas Kurian expressed would still exist."

They would? Assuming Karen Hauptman is correct about this—that some significant body of Duke opinion shares Philip Kurian's disapproval of the "exorbitant Jewish privilege in the United States"—isn't that kind of a problem? Duke University president Richard H. Brodhead, what say you?

In a letter to the *Chronicle* published October 20, Brodhead, unbelievably, sayeth this: that he is "grateful to the many individuals and groups who helped turn last week's Palestine Solidarity Movement conference into a peaceful and constructive event"—and troubled by the "disindividuating" and "dehumanizing" criticism to which those individuals and groups were subjected. On the other hand, Brodhead is also "deeply troubled" by young Philip Kurian's *Chronicle* piece about "the Jews." Duke, Brodhead points out, is universally welcoming. "Whatever you believe, this is your place."

Presbyterian Church Elder Ronald Stone would be right at home there, for example. ♦

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Casual

Tailor-Made

I was in Nordstrom, buying a black blazer. My salesman was a genial man in his forties, bald and plumpish, carefully turned-out. Good at what he did, not pushing in any way, he smoothly played along with my desire to be taken as a man of the world. Our transaction complete, he gave me his business card, suggesting I ask for him when next I came in.

The name on the card was the same as that of a Jewish family that used to make and sell ice cream in Chicago. Was he, I asked, of that family?

"No," he said. "My grandfather was a tailor and so was my father. And if I could have had my way, so would I have been."

"Really," I said, marveling at the notion that today, in the early 21st century, a middle-class American would want to be a tailor.

"Did you know that a good tailor can make a salary in the six figures?" he said. "We have tailor-made ties in this store that go for more than $200 a shot.

"I remember, as a young boy, watching my grandfather at his bench making neckties," he continued. "I was fascinated. I wanted him to teach me how to do it. But he wouldn't. He and my father both discouraged me from becoming a tailor."

"Sounded too immigrant-like, too old world, to them?" I asked. "Exactly," he said. "They would have felt great failures in life if their grandson and son had become a tailor. It's too late for me to learn how to do it now."

An aura of dolor clung to our conversation. It's one thing not to know what one wants to do in life; another to know what one wants to do but not have the talent to do it; but a third, sadder thing, is to know precisely what one wants to do and never be permitted to discover if one can do it. Wanting to work at the useful craft of his ancestors, my salesman was prevented from doing so by the very American aspirations of his family.

These same aspirations probably explain why it seems so difficult to hold on to a family business for three generations. An exception is a younger friend of mine, who, along with his brothers, is among the third generation in his family to run a number of restaurants in Chicago. He recently sent me a half-joking

email announcing that his restaurant received an award for having the best tap beer in Chicago. I consider that award more significant than many poetry prizes given out over the past year, because the beer doubtless gave more pleasure than the poems, and I say this as a reader of poetry who is not an enthusiastic beer drinker.

This man also happens to have been a student of mine. He wrote a very solid paper on Joseph Conrad for a master's degree. He could have been a respectable academic, but my guess is that he is more content and providing more happiness running an excellent restaurant.

I know a man, the son of Greek immigrants, who sells produce west of the Loop, who once told me that he shall always honor my friend Edward Shils because he discouraged him from going to school to become a dental technician and encouraged him to remain in the business of selling fruits and vegetables.

Yet the pull (ostensibly) to improve one's status is always there, turning out to be a goad, often, to dissatisfaction. Perhaps it all started with John Adams, who, in a famous letter to his wife Abigail, wrote: "I must study politics and war that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy . . . geography, natural history, naval architecture, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain." Put in more contemporary terms, this might read: "I worked at dry cleaning in order that my son could have the liberty to study sociology in order that his son could have the right to undergo a sex-change operation."

I search the long roll of my friends and acquaintances and discover that scarcely any of them actually *makes* anything. They write and teach and go to court and attempt to reduce pain and gamble on markets and shuffle paper generally. I, too, am a paper shuffler; the only difference is that the papers I shuffle have my own words on them.

Before I went to college, my father, who was himself a salesman, told me, an indifferent high-school student, that he would pay for my college education, but he thought I would make a fine salesman and my college years might just be a waste of time. I often wonder what my life would have been like if I had listened to him. I wonder, too, what would have happened if my father had said that, given my high-school record, he would not permit me to go to college. The only way I could have gotten him to change his mind would have been to reply, "That's okay, Dad, I really want to be a tailor anyway."

Joseph Epstein

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"Outing" Mary Cheney

William Kristol was right on target with his analysis of John Kerry's venomous attack on Vice President Cheney's daughter ("'Fair Game,'" Oct. 25). Kerry and Edwards pretend to be champions of the common man. But they each used a young woman's dignity as a political tool.

Kerry may now try to sugarcoat his words. But his attack on Mary Cheney speaks volumes about his character—or, more accurately, his lack of character.

Russell Miner
Forest Lake, MN

I completely fail to understand William Kristol's outrage over John Kerry's reference to the Cheneys' gay daughter. What did Kerry say that was insulting? Everybody already knew Mary Cheney was gay. Cheney has mentioned it himself on numerous occasions. So what's the big deal? Besides, Mary Cheney is an adult who is working for her father's campaign. That is "fair game" by anyone's measure.

For that matter, did The Weekly Standard express similar outrage when a teenage Chelsea Clinton was called a "dog" on national radio and "ugly" by a U.S. senator?

Walter Koehler
Springfield, VA

I was not cynical enough to take issue with John Edwards's reference to Mary Cheney during the vice-presidential debate. I gave Edwards the benefit of the doubt, as did the talking heads. I'm not sure if we gave Edwards the benefit of the doubt because he sugarcoated the context, or because Dick Cheney was present, or because it was the first time the inference was drawn.

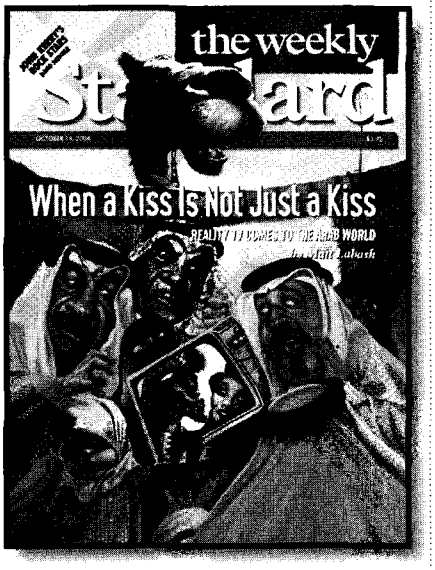
After reading William Kristol's editorial, I suspect that without the sugarcoating, Edwards may have found himself in the hot seat. John Kerry wasn't able to pull it off because, as Kristol put it, his remark came "out of left field." Dick Cheney was not present, the example was both unnecessary and redundant, and Kerry's sugarcoating consisted of merely an empathetic tone (that was obviously poorly rehearsed).

In hindsight, we were duped into giving John Edwards the benefit of the doubt because of his superior calculation. Edwards was less transparent than Kerry. But he is thus even more reprehensible.

Gary Poff
Chandler, AZ

William Kristol is absolutely correct. John Kerry's comments about Mary Cheney were calculated and malicious. However, this was only one of Kerry's two slip-ups in the final debate—which, incidentally, may be causing the recent shift toward President Bush.

Bush won the hearts of undecided women when he told the story of how he and Laura met and experienced "love at first sight." Kerry's response, by contrast, was clumsy. It was the first time I saw



him tongue-tied as the cameras panned to a scowling Teresa Heinz Kerry sitting in the audience.

This was the last thing voters saw and heard at that debate. It may be the real reason for the shifting polls.

Scott Shoemaker
Winchester, VA

William Kristol writes so eloquently what I have been thinking—and seething—about since the third debate (indeed, since the VP debate). He sums up the whole Mary Cheney incident perfectly.

John Kerry and John Edwards—not to mention Elizabeth Edwards, with her follow-up comments directed at Lynne Cheney—have established a new low for the Democratic party. They sicken me as a mother. I hope other mothers will feel the same sense of disgust at the use of someone's daughter in such an ugly way.

Donna Dilks
Isle of Palms, SC

I agree with William Kristol that Kerry should not have brought up Dick Cheney's daughter in the debate. That being said, which is worse: that Kerry brought up Cheney's daughter to prove a point, or that George W. Bush evaded pointed questions on homosexuality and abortion?

Why wouldn't Bush just come out and say he feels homosexuality is an abomination, and if he got the opportunity to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade* (via Supreme Court appointments) he almost certainly would? Plus, wasn't Lynne Cheney a bit over the top with her indignation, considering she agrees with Kerry's actual statement?

If the Kerry campaign were really as underhanded as Kristol implies, they would have mentioned Mrs. Cheney's 1981 novel *Sisters*, which includes a lesbian relationship.

Jason Kucharsky
Queens, NY

William Kristol's analysis of John Kerry's scurrilous comments about Mary Cheney was right on the money. I just hope that the millions of uncommitted voters who heard the debate were as turned off by those comments as I was.

By the way, Kerry campaign manager Mary Beth Cahill's remarks about Dick Cheney's daughter being "fair game" indicate the Kerry campaign thinks of same-sex marriage as a "game," rather than the serious subject that it is.

Ken Bauer
Madison, AL

William Kristol's article on the Mary Cheney issue was very insightful. My question is: What if a Republican had done what John Kerry did? Imagine the outcry that would have ensued.

I don't care what party you are associated with—what Kerry did was wrong. I heard on Fox News that there was a col-

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lective groan in the press room during the debate. I believe it. My own reaction was simply: Has it come to this? Whatever happened to basic political ethics? And what does it say about your character when you defend something you know is wrong, just because it may help your party?

DAVE HANKINS
South Bend, IN

AMEN TO ALL THAT William Kristol writes in "'Fair Game.'" As a gay Republican, I could empathize with Mary Cheney. She appears to have more courtesy and class in her little finger than John Kerry and John Edwards possess in their combined beings.

ROSS A. HOFFMAN
Grand Rapids, MI

I WANT TO THANK William Kristol for calling John Kerry what he is: an opportunist who will use anything and anybody to further his own political agenda. Just when it seems the Democrats can sink no lower, they come up with something like this.

I'm very proud that President Bush is an honorable man who does not try to build himself up at someone else's expense.

SYLVIA SIMPSON
Trophy Club, TX

I TRULY APPRECIATED William Kristol's article on Mary Cheney. It mirrored my thoughts exactly. If someone ever exploited my child the way John Kerry and John Edwards did with Mary Cheney, I don't think I would behave with as much reserve and class as the Cheneys did.

I admire them greatly, and I admire Mary Cheney for having more intestinal fortitude than Kerry and Edwards put together.

MARGARET SHAW PELETIER
San Antonio, TX

TIME FOR AN "OOHRAH!"

REUEL MARC GERECHT'S article "The Battle for Iraq" (Oct. 11) was followed by a sub-headline that said it all: "Forget gradualism and Iraqification—send in the Marines." Our politicians and diplomats are so frozen by international political correctness that they refuse to see the obvious: The Iraqis do not like us, and almost none of the Arabs like us.

The U.S.-led coalition humiliated all Arabs when they rapidly defeated what the region saw as an elite Arab fighting force. As much as most hated Saddam Hussein, we made no friends by humiliating them. Our military operation sent an unmistakable message to the region. That message was understood. Libya responded quickly, and others backed off. Respect, however, is one thing. Gratitude is quite another. We cannot be naive about this. Arabs do not like us any more now than they did on 9/11.

We are now diluting that positive message with unproductive "gradualism" in Iraq. We must do what we do best. We need to clean out, pacify, and then get out. There will be no cleaning out or pacifying as long as we fear Arab reaction to the point that we refrain from taking action. Delay will only make things worse.

The Arabs, including Iraqis, understand respect. To them, tolerating disrespect is a sign of weakness. We are way overdue. The only way out of the mess in Iraq is to send in the Marines.

WAYNE G. SKAGGS
Wimberley, TX

BUSH'S MORAL REALISM

IN HIS ARTICLE PRAISING the Bush administration's crusade for "democracy" ("The Two Faces of Liberalism," Oct. 18), Adam Wolfson admits that "Iraqi gratitude was never to be expected, since the war was undertaken more in self-defense than to end that country's misery." Wolfson's realism is welcome—though in view of Iraq's lack of weapons of mass destruction, his term "self-defense" deserves scrutiny.

But if he admits that Iraqis did not want us to invade, then how was our attack a gift of democracy? The gap between slogan and reality is apparent in plans for the January elections, where exile-led parties friendly to the United States are colluding to dominate the vote. One danger is that America's self-serving use of "democracy" will lead others to scorn democracy itself. That is why John Kerry's internationalist realism would do more to advance democracy than George Bush's moralist militarism.

And if we really care about democracy, isn't it interesting that the rest of the world ardently wishes to see new leadership in the United States?

DAVID KEPPEL
Bloomington, IN

NEVER HAVE WE EVER . . .

THE CHALLENGE for William Kristol's succinct editorial "Never" (Oct. 18) must have been how to choose among Senator John Kerry's many unique negatives. I therefore must add another "never before" item, because it still stuns me.

Last year, Kerry described the 30-plus nations who comprise our coalition in Iraq as a "trumped-up, so-called coalition of the bribed, the coerced, the bought, and the extorted."

I have a history question for WEEKLY STANDARD readers: Has any American politician—never mind presidential candidate—ever managed to heap more brazen contempt on more close allies with fewer words?

G. KENDRICK MACDOWELL
Washington, DC

WILLIAM KRISTOL missed one on his "never before" theme: Never before has the United States elected a president whose speeches were once piped into the cells of American POWs for the purpose of demoralizing them.

KIRK O. KOLBO
Minneapolis, MN

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the weekly Standard

The 9/11 Election

"We have to get back to the place we were, where terrorists are not the focus of our lives, but they're a nuisance."

—*John Kerry,* New York Times Magazine, *October 10, 2004*

"What American would not trade the economy we had in the 1990s, the fact that we were not at war and young Americans were not deployed?" —*John Kerry, on* Larry King Live, *July 8, 2004*

"During the decade of the 1990s, our times often seemed peaceful on the surface. Yet beneath the surface were currents of danger. Terrorists were training and planning in distant camps. . . . America's response to terrorism was generally piecemeal and symbolic. The terrorists concluded this was a sign of weakness, and their plans became more ambitious, and their attacks more deadly. Most Americans still felt that terrorism was something distant, and something that would not strike on a large scale in America. That is the time my opponent wants to go back to. A time when danger was real and growing, but we didn't know it. . . . September 11, 2001, changed all that. We realized that the apparent security of the 1990s was an illusion. . . . Will we make decisions in the light of September 11, or continue to live in the mirage of safety that was actually a time of gathering threats?"

—*George W. Bush, October 18, 2004*

This is the first presidential election since September 11, 2001. Its central issue is the meaning of September 11. The events of that day did not really "change everything," as Bush sometimes says in a defensible shorthand. But they did reveal, as columnist Paul Greenberg put it, that "everything we had thought/assumed/expected in the Golden '90s hadn't been so." The surface peace of the 1990s had been bought at a great price. On 9/11 a failure of American leadership was revealed, a failure to look ahead and act forcefully to forestall threats—to do what Bush has called "the hard work of fighting terror and spreading freedom."

This is what President Bush thinks. John Kerry really doesn't agree. That's why it is so fitting that Bill Clinton will reemerge to campaign for Kerry this week. The choice will then be clearly posed: On the one hand, we can attempt to return to the 1990s. This is not, of course, an unattractive prospect, but it is surely an unachievable one. To pretend we can go back to the 1990s raises false hopes that will prove dangerous to the country. On the other hand, we can face our challenges, and carry out our duties—as President Bush has tried, with considerable success, to lead us to do.

In his October 18 speech on the war on terror, President Bush noted correctly that his opponent "has not made democracy a priority of his foreign policy." Indeed, Kerry's critique of Bush goes beyond competence in the execution of policy to first principles. Kerry does not see a need to fundamentally change the political culture of the Middle East. Bush posed the challenge well: "Is he content to watch and wait, as anger and resentment grow for more decades in the Middle East, feeding more terrorism until radicals without conscience gain the weapons to kill without limit?" Bush isn't. Thus he embraces the task of helping to spread "democracy and hope" so that "governments that oppose terror multiply across the Middle East."

He does so for reasons his counterpart Tony Blair recently explained. This is the only way to deal with a "worldwide global terrorism" based on a perversion of Islam: "Its roots are not superficial but deep, in the madrassas of Pakistan, in the extreme forms of Wahhabi doctrine in Saudi Arabia, in the training camps of al Qaeda in Afghanistan. . . . If you take this view, if you believe September 11 changed the world . . . the only path to take is to confront this terrorism and remove it root and branch."

New York Times columnist Tom Friedman recently criticized the Bush administration for being "addicted to 9/11." He praised John Kerry for "wanting to put terrorism back into perspective." Friedman continued, "I want a president who can one day restore Sept. 11th to its rightful place on the calendar: as the day after Sept. 10th and before Sept. 12th. I do not want it to become a day that defines us. Because ultimately Sept. 11th is about them—the bad guys—not about us. We're about the Fourth of July."

We at THE WEEKLY STANDARD yield to no one in our loyalty to the Fourth of July. But September 11, 2001, also cannot help but define us 21st-century Americans. And it defines us not simply in terms of those we have to fight and defeat. For September 11 is not simply about "the bad guys," about the attacks on America. September 11 is also about our response. It is about the police and firefighters in New York, the servicemen and women in the Pentagon, and the passengers and crew of United Flight 93. September 11 was a day of infamy. But it was also a day of bravery, and of nobility. And it could go down in history as a day that began an era in which the American people, and their leaders, rose to the challenges before them—an era in which they acted wisely, and steadfastly, and honorably. September 11 saw horrible hours. But it could also be the beginning of one of America's finest hours. The chances of that will be greatest under President Bush.

—*William Kristol*

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The Circuitous Campaign

Bush got where his strategists predicted, but not in the manner they expected. BY FRED BARNES

AT THE BEGINNING of the presidential campaign last winter, President Bush and his strategists figured he'd wind up leading his Democratic opponent by 2 or 3 points on the eve of the November 2 election. Sure enough, he is. But he got here by a far more circuitous route than anyone in his camp expected. The Bush team thought the Democrat would take the lead after his convention, then fade in the debates. The opposite happened.

Unless you believe quite a few arguable things that Democrats insist are true, the president is in a position to win a second White House term. One Democratic belief is that massive voter registration will bring millions of new voters to the polls for Kerry, voters whom pollsters haven't caught up with. That's possible. Another is that between now and Election Day, Bush won't pick up any ground at all, while Kerry will. That would make all the difference since Bush, though ahead, is stuck in the high 40s in poll matchups against Kerry. A president's vote percentage is usually the same as the last Gallup poll. So if it's under 50 percent, Bush loses. Maybe. Finally, Democrats claim the late undecideds go overwhelmingly for the challenger. They're wrong about that.

Bush suffered through four turning points in the campaign. He entered the year in a strong position, but lost his lead after David Kay reported there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Kerry won the Democratic nomination. That was the first turn. But the conventions went badly for Kerry and swimmingly for Bush, so on Labor Day the president was back in the lead—turn number two.

Bush greets supporters in Las Vegas

Reuters / Landov / Jason Reed

Bush was cocky going into the first debate and his aides assumed he'd perform well, since the subject matter, national security, is his strong suit. He flopped and within a few days, Kerry had closed the gap. That was the third turning point, and the fourth came two weeks later after the final debate, which Bush won. The soundbite that emerged was Kerry's mention of Mary Cheney, the vice president's daughter, as a lesbian. That went over poorly, especially with women, and Bush regained the lead.

Could Bush still lose? Sure. My rule of thumb is that the future in politics is never a straight-line projection of the present. Even a few days is enough time for something damaging to Bush to occur. In 2000, Bush was 5 or 6 points ahead, or so he thought, with a week to go. Then Democrats leaked Bush's drunk-driving arrest of years before and he sank like a stone, losing the popular vote. Bush's advisers are worried. They fear a revelation of another bit of unfavorable personal information about Bush, true or not. Or a Bush mistake, a verbal gaffe perhaps. Or a terrorist attack.

As for being swamped by a record turnout of new Democratic voters—that's not a major Bush concern. The Bush folks think many of the newly registered won't actually vote. Besides, Republican voter registration drives in Ohio and Florida have produced more new voters than Democratic efforts have. And, the Bush camp feels, these voters in Republican areas are more likely to go to the polls or vote early.

The undecideds who make up their minds at the last minute? For good reason, Republicans don't buy the idea that these voters go strongly to the challenger. In 1976 and even in 1992, they tilted toward incumbent presidents running for reelection. In 1968 and 2000, vice presidents were virtual incumbents and the late deciding vote went to them. Also, Bush strategist Matthew Dowd says, these 4 or 5 percent of voters who are undecided are not liberals or folks otherwise hostile to Bush but are middle-class moderates or conservatives, many of them regular churchgoers. And Dowd cites the University of Michigan's tracking

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of presidential races over many decades that has found undecideds split evenly between the candidates. Of course, some of them won't vote.

The most worrisome factor for Bush is the job approval number, probably the most predictive single indicator of voter preference. In the Fox News poll, for example, Bush leads Kerry by 4 points, but he's only at 49 percent in job approval. Okay, that's hardly evidence for predicting a Bush defeat. But it is disturbing. Then, closer to Election Day, there's the final Gallup number (52 percent now) and the average of Bush's level of support in all major polls (48.4 percent now, according to RealClear Politics). Democratic experts assume the president can't get a higher percentage than either on Election Day. Ron Brownstein of the *Los Angeles Times* points out that of eight incumbents who've sought reelection since 1952, five got less than the Gallup percentage and two matched it. Only the first President Bush finished ahead of the Gallup number and only by .7 percent. He lost the election to Bill Clinton.

At the very least, the Gallup number and the average of other polls should be worth a glance on the eve of the election. So should the voter-turnout efforts of the two parties. The Republican 72-hour plan was in operation in 2000 and did so-so. In the 2002 midterm election, however, that plan worked marvelously well, and Republican turnout was far better than Democratic. Democrats were smart enough to learn a lesson that year and have improved their own turnout plan.

It's possible, though, that all this won't matter much and what happened earlier was decisive. The 9/11 attacks made national security the paramount issue and not the Democratic staples—economy, education, health care. This would favor Bush. But the Iraq war inflamed his opponents, who seemed to have all the political energy. This favors Kerry. In the larger scheme of things, 9/11 trumps Iraq, and so my guess is Bush wins. But it's only a guess. ♦

The New Know-Nothings

Of the making of celebrity get-out-the-vote documentaries there is no end. BY MATT LABASH

AT THE END of every election cycle, we hope to retire the clichés that have bedeviled us. Yet every four years, they reemerge from dormancy, causing pain, discomfort, and minor inflammation. We hold these clichés to be self-evident: (1) that this campaign season, like all those before it and without regard to actual history, will be deemed by some professor to be the most "negative" one ever; (2) that if an Ohio swing voter has a single unexpressed thought, a television producer will be dispatched to rectify that oversight; and (3) that some nitwit celebrity, who prior to the election couldn't find the newspaper's national affairs section if it came wrapped around his Chilean sea bass, will admit to a lifelong disengagement with our political system. To atone, he will then invite a documentary film crew to follow him around as he lectures the rest of us about the importance of voting.

If journalism, like politics, is show-business for ugly people, credit the news-gatherers with this much: We know our limitations. We are aware that we'd make awful actors, as Gridiron Dinner sketches acutely remind us. But this self-awareness seems unfairly one-sided. Celebrities have no idea that they make awful journalists. For the purpose of becoming a journalist is to explore the wider world. The purpose of becoming a celebrity is to explore yourself.

Most celebrities, of course, think that by exploring themselves, they are exploring the wider world. When many of them wake up in their mid-20s, after years of decadent sex and cocaine abuse, they finally discover that there are these things called "elections," which can affect the fate of the republic. Then they learn that you don't even have to audition to participate. Instead, you "register" and "vote" so that you too can "have a voice," as they like to say.

The fact that most people who have any business voting in elections mastered these concepts in ninth-grade civics is of no concern to the celebrity. Because *he* just discovered the importance of participation, this self-discovery must be not so much shared, as inflicted. And never mind grappling with thorny questions such as whom you should vote for. Or even whether the ill-informed should be encouraged to vote in the first place. That would require a moment's thought. And celebrities weren't put here to think. In this way, they do know their limitations. Any idiot can insist we need to vote. Which is why so many celebrities do.

Shortly after the advent of the "Rock the Vote" advocacy campaign featured on MTV, the genre got off to an inauspicious start with a documentary called *The Last Party*. Would that the title were literal. Alas, it was not the last party featuring celebrity-civics *narcissisme vérité*, but the first of many. Hosted by part-time actor/full-time rehabber Robert Downey Jr., *The Last Party* set the bar about as low as it could possibly go.

Armed with nothing but his pretensions and a camera crew, Downey lit out on the campaign trail. When not talking about his own battles with drug addiction and intimacy issues

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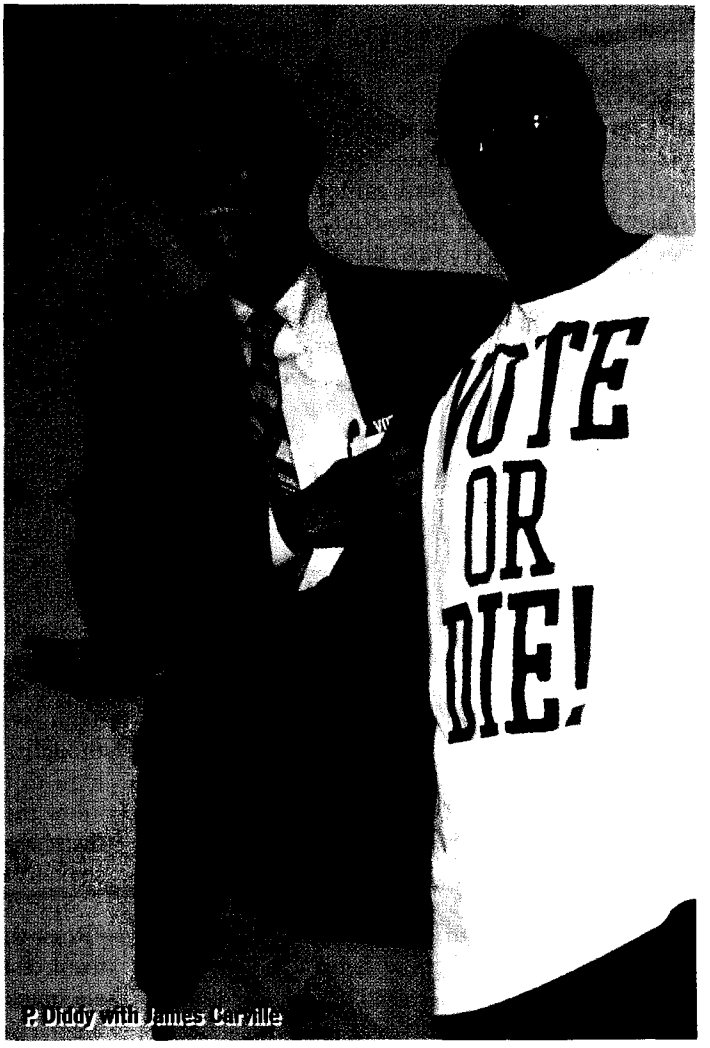
("the idea of a vagina brings up a lot of . . . resentment," he shared), he attempted to reveal the pointlessness, the artifice, and the utmost importance of participating in our electoral process. If those themes seemed contradictory, Downey didn't pause over them. Instead he broke into arty asides, such as meditating in a park in his underwear, going for a swim in a public fountain, or jumping up and down on all fours, doing a character he called "goat boy." It's one of the advantages of being a celebrity journalist. Such devices aren't generally available to Jim Lehrer.

Two cycles later, in the year 2000, came *The Party's Over* (and no, it wasn't), hosted by Philip Seymour Hoffman. We know we're in for a rough go when Hoffman, as talented an actor as he is untalented a documentarian, tells us, "I decided to host this documentary because I felt ill-informed." He trudges along the campaign trail with three-day growth and shabby ski-hats, looking like an appetizer-sized version of Michael Moore. (All he's missing is 100 pounds and a point of view.)

Hoffman even gets to Washington, D.C., which he discovers is the political epicenter of our country. Thoroughly impressionable, he seems to adopt the opinion of whoever he interviewed last, be it Noam Chomsky (who offers that most politicians seek to divide and conquer), or Ralph Nader (who suggests that both parties are beholden to corporate interests). By the time he finishes, Hoffman is capable of proffering banalities of his own. "I think this whole thing is about survival of the fittest," he says at one point. He really ought to get a patent on this stuff.

In the 2004 cycle, we are being treated to a double-shot of celebrity documentary do-goodism, which has put me in the unfamiliar position of being an undecided voter: I can't decide who's more annoying, P. Diddy or Drew Barrymore. Mr. Diddy, aka Sean Combs, the rapper-fashion-mogul-all-purpose-publicity-tapeworm, has sampled the work of fellow rap impresario Russell Simmons, who started the voter-registration Hip Hop Summit. Diddy, this summer, started "Citizen Change," which is working in conjunction with MTV's similar "Choose or Lose" campaign. But Diddy has upped the stakes: His slogan is "Vote or Die!" *Voting . . . dying . . . voting . . . dying*—most would probably go with the former, though the latter has its appeal, as it would mean escaping platitudinous celebrity harangues.



P. Diddy with James Carville

Which is not to suggest Diddy's isn't a serious organization. Diddy says that Citizen Change is "all about making voting hot—it's sexy to speak out." To prove it, he sells Babydoll "Vote or Die" T-shirts for $28, a bargain at twice the price. But he doesn't stop there. His *Vote or Die* special has been in semi-regular rotation on MTV. In it, he goes out among the people. Or at least he drives his convertible Bentley through Harlem, from which he does most of his commentary, waving at hot women, saying politically conscientious things like "What's up, baby?" It's his mission, he says, to "hip my people to the hustles of what's really going on."

Diddy wants to turn what he estimates is the 40-million strong "hip-hop nation" into a voting bloc rivaling the AARP, since the latter's ranks vote in droves, unlike young people. He has run the numbers and decided that the hip-hop nation is bigger than soccer moms or NASCAR dads. Never mind that a good percentage of those 40 million are below voting age, or that it's impossible to treat them as a monolith. For instance, 72 percent of hip-hop buyers are white people (although 42 percent of those pretend they're black).

"You see how much Bush and Kerry are sweatin' those groups," implores Diddy. "C'mon, y'all. Please, let's get hip hop on their ass." While Diddy does make the salient point that politicians ignore inner-city communities because they vote in such anemic numbers, he has some

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bizarre ideas about politics. He papers over hip-hop culture's nihilism and glorification of violence, which hamper these communities every bit as much as political neglect, even while showing a montage of rappers displaying jewelry and sipping Cristal in hot tubs. "That's political, that's power," says Diddy. Then he swings us to the harsh streets of South Central L.A., where Big Greg raps: *America's a rich man's vision / But a poor man's prison / So don't expect these politicians to give us a pot to piss in*. That's the spirit, Big Greg. Easy cynicism coupled with unrealistic optimism are the twin poles of most celebrity political documentaries.

That, and abject stupidity, which is exemplified in Drew Barrymore's *The Best Place to Start*, also airing on MTV. Casual Barrymore followers probably still think of the 29-year-old as the child darling of *E.T.*, or they recall her boob-flashing on David Letterman, her serial marriages, drug and alcohol bouts, and her flirtations with bisexuality and animism. Convinced that everything has a soul, she at one point advocated the welfare of washcloths.

Not that I'm suggesting Barrymore is a flake. Okay, I am. But it's hard to come to any other conclusion, when she opens her film grandiosely with, "I am a repressed voter. I want to learn about the voting system. I want to be a voter." I want to smack the silly out of her, but you can't have everything. Still, Drew tries. Having admitted elsewhere that she didn't know what the Electoral College was or what the word "partisan" meant, she gets cracking on her education by filming herself at the library, reading the Declaration of Independence, and, like, other important stuff. "But the more I read," she says, "the more confused I got."

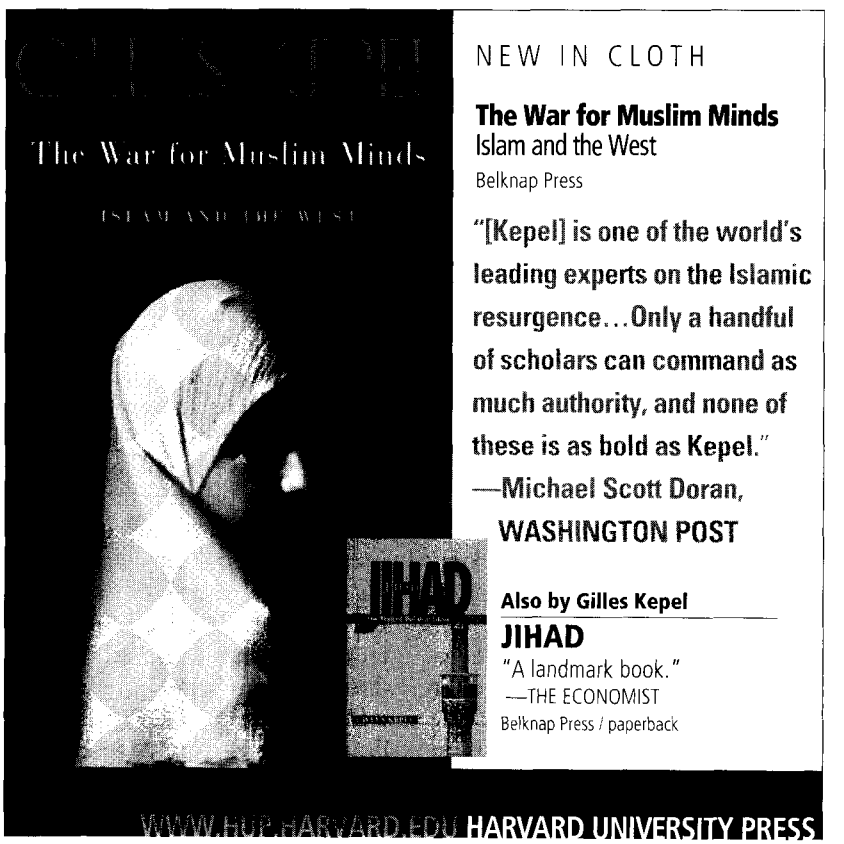
So she decides to hit the campaign trail, to learn firsthand what we political reporters already know: It sucks. On Wes Clark's bus, she asks how politicians can spark the interest of younger voters. She is crushed when she gets a boilerplate answer. "If I was, like, an 18-year-old that, like, didn't really care," she says later, "it would have gone right over my head." Hard to believe. But she presses on, accosting leaders and leading entertainers (such as Chris Rock and Bill Maher), trying to get at the throbbing heart of why we should participate civically. After learning who her congressman is (Henry Waxman), she asks him: "So what would you say to young people as far as where they're at, as far as what society is sort of telling them about voting [where] at least in the last election, everything was a little bit janky? What do you say to them to, like, let them not be discouraged?"

She says she came to Washington with enthusiasm, but left "feeling really stupid." She ends up crying to her producer, "I don't know what I'm doing." The producer comforts her with, "That's okay, the good news is that you don't have to pretend you know what you're doing." "Why did I choose politics, why?" Barrymore asks despondently. "I thought, oh, it's something I don't know about, so this will be a great way to learn, and months later, I just feel like such a tool."

Like most celebrities, she soon gets over her insecurity when she realizes that this film is not just about voting, it's about her. She makes a "civil rights quest" to Selma, Alabama, where nearly 40 years ago, aspiring black voters were beaten and clubbed and maimed by thuggish police officers. "I've always been enlightened by struggle," says Drew.

Barrymore walks silently, stoically over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the scene of the crime. Her voiceover intones, "I have also come to believe that we all passionately want to feel a part of something so that we are not alone, and although voting is a very personal ritual, it brings us all together in the most profound way."

It's supposed to be her big, deep-thoughts moment, the coda that makes all her confusion and self-doubt worthwhile. It left me with a thought of my own: Where are the cops when you need them? ♦



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Never Apologize, Never Explain

John Kerry's real record as an antiwar activist.

BY JOSHUA MURAVCHIK

JOHN KERRY SAYS HE IS "PROUD" of his activities in opposition to the Vietnam War. Why, then, have he and his spokesmen consistently misrepresented them? Indeed the Kerry camp has been so effective in obscuring this history that both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were forced to run corrections on the subject recently because their reporters relied on misinformation that the Kerry camp had succeeded in putting into wide circulation.

When the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth unveiled the fourth in their series of television ads—this one accusing Kerry of having "secretly met with the enemy" in Paris—both papers went into full debunking mode. The *Post* ran 600 words under the headline: "Ad Says Kerry 'Secretly' Met With Enemy; But He Told Congress of It." The story explained that the Swifties were "referring to a meeting Kerry had in early 1971 with leaders of the communist delegation that was negotiating with U.S. representatives at the Paris peace talks. The meeting, however, was not a secret. Kerry . . . mentioned it in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April of that year."

The next morning the *Post* ran a correction. The previous day's story, it noted, "incorrectly said that John F. Kerry met with a Vietnamese communist delegation in Paris in 1971. The meeting was in 1970." The correction did not acknowledge, however, that this apparently minor error invalidated the entire point of the *Post*'s impeachment of the Swifties' ad. Kerry's visit to Paris took place in or around May 1970, eleven months before his Foreign Relations Committee testimony. In other words, his meeting with the Communists (while he was still a reserve officer in the U.S. Navy) appears to have been kept secret for nearly a year.

In downplaying Kerry's meetings with the Communists, campaign spokesmen have deliberately sown the impression that Kerry was in Paris on his honeymoon, a story that has been repeated in the press and on the Internet. The *Boston Globe* reported: "After their May 1970 marriage, Kerry traveled to Paris with his wife, Julia Thorne, on a private trip, [Kerry spokesman Michael] Meehan said." But various biographies agree that Kerry and his bride honeymooned in Jamaica, an ocean away. The exact dates of their trip to Paris have not been established: It came just after or before or even in the midst of this honeymoon, and the trip seems to have been made expressly for the purpose of meeting with the Communists, although Meehan denies this.

Almost immediately upon returning from his discussions with Communist leaders (and perhaps at their suggestion), Kerry joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. (Over the previous months he had garnered attention by speaking out against the war but had operated independently.) He was immediately appointed to the group's executive committee by its director, Al Hubbard, a radical affiliated with the Black Panther party. From then on, Kerry twinned with Hubbard as the organization's principal spokesmen.

One thing that may have contributed to the *Post*'s confusion about the year was that Kerry did go to Paris to meet the Communists in 1971, some time during the summer, probably in August. But this was a second trip, and Kerry's advocates have done their best to veil the fact that there was more than one trip. Indeed, FBI files reveal that Kerry planned a third such trip together with Hubbard for November of that year. But, as it turned out, Hubbard went without Kerry, perhaps because the two had by then fallen out over revelations that Hubbard's repeated claims to have been an officer and a Vietnam vet were fabricated. (He had been an enlisted man and had never been in Vietnam.) The fact that there was a second and a planned third trip exclusively to meet with the Communists strengthens the inference that this was also the nature of the first trip, despite Meehan's denials.

The correction that the *New York Times* ran also stemmed from the Swifties' ad. It had to do not with the date of Kerry's visit to Paris but with the identity of his interlocutors there. "In another broadside against Mr. Kerry," the paper had reported, "the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, whose past accusations have frequently been unsubstantiated, says in a new commercial that Mr. Kerry went to Paris in the 1970s and 'secretly met with the enemy.'" Then the *Times* rejoined: "Mr. Kerry testified shortly thereafter that he had met with both sides at the Vietnam peace talks to discuss the status of prisoners of war." In a follow-up two days later, the paper repeated this account.

The next week, however, the *Times*'s correction acknowledged that it had "misidentified the parties with whom Mr. Kerry said he had met at the Paris peace talks. . . . The parties were the two Communist delegations–North Vietnam and the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government." The *Times* clearly exonerated Kerry of its error, noting that "he did not say he had met with 'both sides.'" This is true to a point. In 1971 when Kerry described his first Paris meeting, he said he had

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talked to "both delegations" and went on to explain that he meant both *Communist* delegations. But when the issue of Kerry's dealings with the Communists had resurfaced earlier this campaign year, his aides characteristically fudged the issue. The *Boston Globe*, again relying on what it was told by Kerry campaign spokesman Michael Meehan, reported that Kerry had met with "members of both delegations to the peace talks," which certainly gave readers the impression that he had met with both sides. *Globe* correspondent Patrick Healy confirms that this is what he understood Meehan to mean.

Why all the obfuscation from the Kerry camp? Because his activities were not as innocent as he would like them to be remembered. The antiwar movement, broadly speaking, had two wings. To one, the war was a tragedy: America's actions were well-intentioned but misguided. To the other, the war was a crime: America's motives were less worthy of sympathy than those of its enemies. Kerry sometimes sounded as if he were in the former camp, as when he warned against being "the last man to die for a mistake." More often, he was in the latter camp, as when he accused American forces of "crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command," a kind of language he never used about the behavior of Communist forces.

America had gotten so far off track that we needed a "revolution" to recapture our founding principles, Kerry said, while also suggesting that our enemies were more in tune with those principles. Ho Chi Minh, he declared, was "the George Washington of Vietnam" who was trying "to install the same provisions into the government of Vietnam" that appeared in the U.S. Constitution.

This attitude underlay his trips to meet with the Communist delegations in Paris. Although he accused American leaders of lying, he returned from Paris to endorse the Viet Cong's "peace plan" as if the pronouncements of Communist leaders deserved to be taken at face value. The Viet Cong's foreign minister, Madame Binh, had told him, he said, that "if the United States were to set a date for withdrawal, the prisoners of war would be returned." The fact that she said so, he suggested, proved that President Nixon was lying: "I think this negates very clearly the argument of the president that we have to maintain a presence in Vietnam, to use as a negotiating block for the return of those prisoners. The setting of a date will accomplish that."

CORBIS / Ken Light

Kerry with fellow members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, June 1970

Today, Kerry and his surrogates make it sound as if his meetings with Communist officials were motivated by concern for American POWs. But this stands history on its head. Disregarding entirely the Geneva convention in their treatment of American prisoners, the Communists used the POWs as hostages, pressing America to capitulate in order to get its men back. Some of the more extreme antiwar leaders collaborated with Hanoi in this extortionate game, leading to deep resentment among most POWs for dishonoring and sabotaging the cause for which they had sacrificed so much.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the group Kerry led, was squarely in the radical wing of the antiwar movement, which is the reason for another of Kerry's misrepresentations. VVAW was so extreme that at its November 1971 leadership conference in Kansas City a motion was tabled to resort to terrorism and commence assassinating America's elected officials. Although the motion was voted down after lengthy debate, the very fact that it was given serious consideration shows just how far-out VVAW was. Probably for that reason, Kerry had denied being present at the meeting in Kansas City. Gerald Nicosia, author of a highly sympathetic account of veterans' antiwar activities, reported in the *Los Angeles Times* earlier this year that "several people at the Kansas City meeting recently said . . . that they had been told by the Kerry campaign not to speak about those events without permission." However, when FBI files released

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under the Freedom of Information Act placed him at the meeting, Kerry withdrew his earlier denial, admitting he may have been there but saying he had "no personal recollection" of it.

The FBI files, however, don't just reflect Kerry's presence. They show a raucous two-day debate, changing venue midstream when someone announced excitedly that the meeting hall was bugged. The highlight of the gathering was a bitter running battle between Kerry and Hubbard, the two former friends and co-leaders. The brouhaha culminated with Hubbard pulling down his pants to show his scars and Kerry finally resigning from the organization which he had so famously led. Participants interviewed by reporters—including Kerry supporters—scoff at Kerry's claim to have forgotten his starring role at this climactic event.

After the war, when Communist repression spread over South Vietnam sending hundreds of thousands of "boat people" to face likely death at sea, dozens of former antiwar leaders led by singer Joan Baez took out newspaper ads decrying the abuses. Those who joined in the statement did not say that they regretted opposing the war, but they faced up to some sense of responsibility for the painful consequences of what they had advocated. The signers included many from the moderate antiwar camp and even some radicals like the priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan, but John Kerry's name could not be found among them.

Just as he has never brought himself to apologize for having said that committing war crimes was the norm for American soldiers in Vietnam, so Kerry could never voice remorse for what happened to the South Vietnamese when the Communists took over. Although his campaign themes often sound like a litany of second-guessing (in Iraq, Americans did too much of the fighting; in Afghanistan, Americans did too little), Kerry seems never to second-guess himself. Whatever he did, he's proud of it, even if he has to misrepresent it. That would be a worrisome trait in a president. ♦

The Referendum on Neoconservatism

It's already over, and the neocons won.

BY TOD LINDBERG

RARELY HAVE THE HOLDERS of any set of political views and policy preferences been so thoroughly caricatured as the "neoconservatives" of the Bush years. To critics, this group of policymakers (preeminently, in the Defense Department and the Office of the Vice President), along with their allies on the outside (preeminently, in the pages of THE WEEKLY STANDARD), is responsible for a kind of hijacking of U.S. foreign policy in the wake of 9/11. Intoxicated by American power and blinded by a utopian vision, the neoconservatives (in the critics' telling) set the country on a disastrous and unnecessary attempt to remake the world in the image of the United States.

And for this, come November 2004, the neoconservatives must pay. The defeat of George W. Bush by his Democratic opponent—and for purposes of the critics' argument, any Democratic opponent would do—would mean a repudiation of this neoconservative view of the world. Many Bush critics saw in Iraq a comprehensive discrediting of neoconservative policy prescriptions, including the doctrine of preemptive or preventive war, belief in the efficacy of military power in general, faith in democratization, and unilateralism. It merely remained for voters to administer the *coup de grâce* at the polls and the neoconservatives would be discredited once and for all.

Neocon-bashing runs the gamut from right to left and from vaguely ill-informed well-meaners to the lunatic fringe. Let it be said that there is certainly an intellectually responsible critique of neoconservative policy positions to be made, and that some have offered measured criticisms from the left (broadly speaking, from a "neoliberal" internationalist position) and from the right (broadly speaking, from the "neorealist" perspective). But what's more striking is an overwhelming continuity of tone and in many cases substance between, say, the Lyndon LaRouche websites and the George Soros empire or the anonymous sources Seymour Hersh relies on in his *New Yorker* articles.

This continuity begins with a sense of "neoconservatism" as a doctrine offering comprehensive policy guidance to which all "neoconservatives" adhere. The next element is the imputation to neoconservatives of a kind of cabalism, according to which they surround their true doctrine with a bodyguard of lies designed to conceal it. From this point, it is but a short step to the view that the neoconservatives are monsters, both menacing and incorrigible. And, of course, the only thing to do with a monster is to destroy it or lock it up before it destroys you.

I won't waste the time of readers of this publication with a genealogy of this nonsense or a rebuttal. I will, however, offer fellow neoconservatives a suggestion that contains a criticism. One not uncommon neoconservative response to such demonization has been to suggest that neoconservatives are not really as influential as all that: Who, me? This won't do. In point of fact, neoconservatives have sought influence for their views and have obtained it.

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Partly as a result, American security strategy has undergone two major changes since the Clinton years. The first was the Bush administration's initial adoption of a sort of unilateralism that led the administration to spurn, somewhat flamboyantly, the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto accords, and the ABM treaty, among other things. This species of American self-assertiveness, which Charles Krauthammer dubbed the "Bush Doctrine" in these pages months before 9/11, was in part the product of an emerging post-Cold War consciousness of the global power position and security responsibilities of the United States. Though a doctrine of unilateralism does not follow from this understanding—other approaches are possible, and even this administration's unilateralist impulses have diminished—the underlying insight was correct and transformational. And neoconservatives certainly had a hand in its emergence, beginning a decade before (but hardly ending) with the notorious leaked study of U.S. hegemony Paul Wolfowitz produced from his Pentagon office at the end of the first Bush administration.

The second turn came after 9/11. Culminating in the promulgation of the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States*, it built on previous insights—many, as noted, from neoconservatives—into the scale of U.S. power and responsibility and outlined measures the United States would take to preserve its position and counter threats of the sort suggested by the 9/11 attack. Once again, neoconservatives were at the forefront of the new thinking. They shouldn't shrink from this fact. They should be proud of it.

In the *National Security Strategy* and in a series of presidential speeches that historians will study for their insight long after George W. Bush and the rest of us are dead, this administration, with a little help from its friends, outlined a new strategic doctrine that is going to guide national security policy for the next 50 years, regardless of who wins the 2004 election.

More or less at a stroke, the United States made several things clear: (1) It intends to do what is necessary to remain the world's foremost military power by an order of magnitude sufficient to discourage all other states from attempting to compete militarily, thereby encouraging the peaceful resolution of disputes between states. (2) The United States will hold governments responsible for what takes place with their consent within their borders: The proposition that state support for terrorists with global reach may have regime-ending consequences will discourage states from allowing terrorists to operate. (3) The nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction is so dangerous that in certain instances, the United States will act preemptively or preventively against states rather than allowing threats to gather; this, in turn, will discourage some (though, alas, not necessarily all) states from the pursuit of such weapons. (4) The best way to secure the peace is through freedom and democracy, because free, democratic states want to live in peace with each other; the United States should therefore be at the forefront of the promotion of freedom and democracy.

Now, there is no getting around the fact that Iraq illustrates the complexity and difficulty of this reorientation of U.S. strategic doctrine. Would that the task before us were easier. Iraq—so, too, Afghanistan—has offered innumerable lessons, some of them quite painful. And it would surely have been possible for the Democratic candidate for president in 2004 to set up the election as a referendum on the "neoconservatives"—I revert to quotation marks because I am once again speaking of the monsters of the febrile imagination of their critics.

All that would have been necessary was for the Democratic nominee to: (1) repudiate America's position of power in the world in favor of multipolarity, encouraging others to rise by reducing American military capacity and withdrawing from existing security commitments; (2) encourage Americans to come to terms with future acts of terrorism on our soil and against our interests abroad, rather than overreacting in such a way that we cause more of what we are trying to mitigate; (3) forswear all preemptive or preventive war options as violations of international law and instead warn of consequences that will follow an attack on us, assuming we can figure out who is responsible and what their address is; (4) advocate a return to the doctrine of noninterference in the internal affairs of other states, which would entail the abandonment of any effort to promote democracy in Iraq in favor of immediate withdrawal, as well as a posture of indifference toward genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the like.

And yet for some reason John Kerry has not chosen to run on such a platform. Rather, he says he wants America to be "respected" but before that, "strong." He proposes to increase the size of the military. He says he wants a more effective war against al Qaeda. He has insisted that he holds preventive military action in reserve. He insists that in using the term "global test," he was surely not suggesting that anyone abroad would have a veto over his actions as president in defense of U.S. security. He clearly favors working with our democratic allies not just because they are allies but because they are democratic and have a valuable contribution to make to our mutual deliberations. And he is open to support for humanitarian intervention in Darfur.

George W. Bush, meanwhile, can hardly be said to have run away from his *National Security Strategy*, or from his support for freedom and democracy, even in the face of an extreme test in Iraq. On the contrary, he has forcefully reaffirmed its central tenets, and points to Afghanistan's first election in its history as a success. At the same time, he does not seem to be in any great hurry to topple additional governments. Prudential considerations weigh heavily.

What we have here, I submit, is not a referendum on neoconservative strategic doctrine but a question of

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who will best implement that doctrine going forward. The case Kerry states is against neoconservative national security policy not in principle, but as executed.

No doubt appearances can be deceiving. If Kerry wins, there is every reason to expect within his administration a protracted clash between the neorealist elements and the neoliberals. But even the neorealists aren't as neo-real as they used to be. They may favor maintaining a norm of nonintervention (what kind of neorealist wouldn't?), but they will allow for sufficient exceptions on humanitarian and, yes, preventive grounds to satisfy the interventionist impulses of the neoliberals. Equally clearly, Kerry would be every bit as multilateralist at the beginning as the Bush administration was unilateralist —until, as seems likely, he runs up against the limits of his preferred *ism*, as Bush did before him.

My point is not that there are no foreign policy stakes in the outcome of this election. I don't much care for John Kerry's strategic instincts as revealed over his three-and-a-half decades in public life, and I don't relish living through the learning curve his administration will have to experience.

A second Bush administration will take office having had ample opportunity to learn from mistakes. But not only from mistakes. Also from its largely successful reorientation of security strategy to deal with a very serious new threat. George W. Bush may or may not win the election. If he does, it seems unlikely in the extreme that his critics, especially the most vociferous critics of the neoconservatives, will declare that they erred and that Bush's reelection constitutes vindication for the neoconservative position. They are too in love with their fear of monsters. But win or lose, the vindication of neoconservatism has already taken place, in that the Democratic candidate in 2004 has found it impossible to run for the Oval Office on a platform of its repudiation, but rather has embraced its central strategic insights. ♦

An LBJ Conservative . . .

. . . trumps a soak-the-rich supply-sider.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

WHEN IT COMES to economic policy, this is no race between Tweedledee and Tweedledum, although in some ways it is between Dumb and Dumber. Both President Bush and Senator Kerry have promised to halve the budget deficit in four or five years, although neither has a credible budget-balancing plan. Conservative George W. Bush talks like Ronald Reagan while spending like Lyndon Baines Johnson, and Boston Brahmin Kerry wants to soak the rich like a southern populist while hoping that upper-income spending and investment will somehow still grow and deliver an increasing flow of funds to the Treasury.

Nor is either candidate particularly coherent when it comes to the trade deficit. Kerry dug into the old union toolkit and came up with the idea of stopping outsourcing. But the scowl on Bob Rubin's face when Kerry unleashed his protectionist idea was even more striking than the one on Bush's face during the first debate. So Kerry now says he will change the tax code to discourage companies from expanding overseas, another way of saying he will make them less able to adopt the most efficient geographic mix of facilities. That should help our international competitiveness no end!

Bush, meanwhile, gets higher grades for resisting, with a few bows to electoral realities, the siren call of protectionism, even in closely fought and job-losing Ohio. But his continued pressure on the Chinese to allow their currency to float against the dollar is a good example of wishing for something you might be unhappy to get. The dollars China now earns by selling to U.S. consumers it reinvests in U.S. Treasuries. If the Chinese comply with the demands being relayed by Commerce Secretary Don Evans, they will earn fewer dollars, and therefore stop buying the huge amounts of our bonds that they have been accumulating. Interest rates will then rise and slow economic growth, not exactly what the job market needs at the moment.

Still, it is reasonable to give the edge on trade policy to Bush, despite his support for steel tariffs (a concession to wring from Congress authority to negotiate broader trade-opening measures), and his willingness to protect farmers. The *Economist* says it best: "The biggest prize . . . is the global trade round. . . . America . . . has been a prime force in pushing the Doha round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations."

In addition, the president and Bob Zoellick, his vigorous trade representative, have continued to press for trade opening agreements. The important if imperfect agreement with Australia has passed the Congress, and others, including one with Central America, are more likely to be approved if Bush is elected than if Kerry is. The Massachusetts senator has promised to review all existing agreements and to put a hold on new ones, to the applause of his union supporters. It seems logical that Bush, with no further political ambitions, will be less likely than Kerry to pander to the numerous interests that continue to clamor for relief from competition with imported goods.

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There are other reasons to think that the economy would be better off if Teresa Heinz Kerry is denied the chance to replace Laura Bush's Texas-style White House décor with something more congenial to the eye of her Francophile husband. Consider, for example, energy policy. Both candidates want to reduce reliance on foreign (especially Saudi) oil. Kerry once had the right idea—raise gasoline taxes—but scurried away from it when his constituency expanded beyond Bostonians whose pre-automobile-age narrow streets make the MTA the transportation of choice. Kerry now opposes all of the following: drilling for new oil in most parts of the United States; increased use of coal because it might contribute to global warming and make it tougher for him to adhere to the Kyoto protocol, which he plans to sign (relax: the Senate will reject it); the expansion of the nuclear industry lest it create waste which he has promised not to store in Nevada or anywhere else; and reliance on the Saudis, who must be chuckling in their tents as Kerry rules out every quantitatively significant alternative to continued reliance on their oil.

George Bush knows he cannot deliver independence from Saudi oil, his promises to do so notwithstanding. But he is more likely to press for a better balanced energy sector. His plan to store nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain, rather than leave it in hundreds of pools around the country, would permit both the safe storage of the stuff and the expansion of the nuclear industry. He is also more likely to issue the permits needed to expand, upgrade, and, with luck, build the new refineries we so desperately need. And he is more likely to keep restrictions on the burning of coal to those necessary to reduce pollutants, rather than set them at a level designed to satisfy the greens, for whom a comparison of costs and benefits is anathema.

Then there is Social Security. Bush is considering a plan that would allow newcomers to the system to invest some of their own money so as to increase the returns now earned on such savings. Kerry says "never," and correctly points out that the president hasn't yet figured out how to finance the transition costs created when some money is diverted from the current pay-as-you-go system into these personal accounts. But Kerry doesn't have to worry about transition costs because he has no plan to transition to a new, viable system. He rules out reducing benefits (although he once proposed lowering the inflation-related increases) or increasing the retirement age (which he favored in 1996), leaving him only one option: to increase taxes. And taxes of the worst sort—on jobs.

Speaking of taxes, we have another reason for giving the president better grades than Kerry. The economy is doing well, but all experts agree that we can't be sure of continued growth until we see what effect higher oil prices and Alan Greenspan's decision to raise interest rates have on growth in the medium term. Most experts agree that the Bush tax cuts have added about one percentage point to growth since the middle of 2001, a stimulus that certainly was needed and may still be. Kerry plans to raise taxes on "the rich," including hundreds of thousands of the small businesses that create many of the new jobs—not a good idea just now, and a plan that hardly seems to follow from the senator's description of an economy growing so slowly that it is unable to create enough good, new jobs.

Bush has a more sensible plan: to overhaul the tax system in order to move some of the burden from incomes to consumption. Properly timed, this reform might provide the added revenues needed to close the budget gap by some combination of accelerating growth and increasing tax receipts. (Even Ronald Reagan followed his 1981 tax cuts with a series of tax increases. If it was good enough for Reagan . . .) And Bush might well be faced with a difficult trade-off: an offer by Congress to go along with major reforms that will stand the nation in good stead for decades, in return for something of a tax increase.

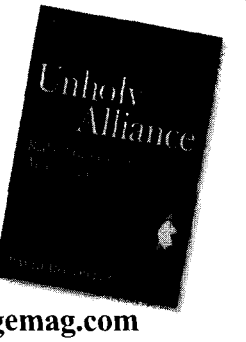
Health care is another economic policy issue in which voters have a choice, not an echo. Kerry would rely on a variety of tax-funded schemes to extend insurance coverage to many not now covered. Along with that coverage will come the inevitable regulations. He would also permit the reimportation of prescription drugs, in the hope of putting downward pressure on drug prices and reducing what he believes to be the excessive profits of the big pharmaceutical companies.

As with Social Security, so with health care: Bush would encourage individual tax-advantaged Health Savings Accounts (HSA) to provide consumers with the funds with which to purchase routine health care, combined with catastrophic insurance for major expenses. And he would free small businesses to join together to spread risk and reduce insurance costs. He also opposes drug reimportation.

Granting that these are all imperfect solutions to a probably intractable problem, Bush's are the more reasonable. The upward spiral in health care costs will slow only when users are made aware of the cost of meeting

"The interests of Muslims and the interests of the socialists coincide in the war against the crusaders." –Osama Bin Laden

Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam And the American Left
by David Horowitz



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their demands for medical services. If the president prevails, consumers will have to face the possibility of dipping into their individual HSAs to pay part of their bills, which just might make them think twice before using a visit to the doctor as part of a day out, as doctors tell me some seniors now do.

Bush scores, too, on the reimportation issue. For one thing, if domestic prices fall to the ceiling set by the Canadian government, some of the research that has developed drugs that shorten hospital stays (saving money) and improve the quality of life will be lost to us. For another, the Canadians have made it clear that they will not permit reimportation to denude their druggists' shelves of supplies merely to save Americans some money. So Kerry is likely to find that supplies of prescription drugs from Canada are about as available as the French and German troops he is counting on to ride to his rescue in Iraq.

Perhaps the most important factor to consider in deciding which of these men is more likely to try to manage the economy in a sensible fashion is the broad philosophic difference between the Texan president and the Massachusetts senator. Faced with an economic issue, Bush instinctively searches for a solution that maximizes individual responsibility, effort, and reward.

Kerry is in the pre-Clinton mainstream of the Democratic party, left-rather than center-leaning. There is rarely a problem for which he does not see a government solution: higher taxes rather than individual Social Security accounts; government-funded health insurance rather than individual health savings accounts. When Kerry used the debates to thump his chest and repeatedly chant, "I've got a plan," he was telling the truth.

In a better world, a third-party candidate, John Maynard Friedman, might be available to steer the American economy, using just the right mix of intervention and benign neglect. In the real world, it's Bush or Kerry, with the president—a radical reformer confronting a status-quo challenger—getting the higher grade in applied economic policy. ♦

Dead or Alive?

Don't be so sure that the Iraq war has made al Qaeda stronger. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

HAS IRAQ made America's fight against Islamic extremism more difficult? Has the war further radicalized the Muslim world, making it easier for Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda to find and train suicidal holy warriors? Al Qaeda may remain today, as the always-thoughtful Clinton administration counterterrorist officials Daniel Benjamin and Steve Simon have written, "a dynamic ideological movement, part of a growing global insurgency [of Islamic extremism]." But does that mean that the war in Iraq, whether or not it was begun for sound and compelling reasons, has accelerated the creation of jihadists who live to kill us? The constant anonymous background discussions and leaks from active-duty and former soldiers, intelligence officers, and diplomats, which has produced a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles casting the war as counterproductive, certainly suggest that many experts see the war as jet-fuel for bin Ladenism.

Senator John Kerry certainly believes that the war in Iraq has made us less safe by augmenting the numbers of Islam's killer-extremists. Echoing the sentiments, and often the language, of the former counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, the senator sees us waging a war in Iraq that is "a profound diversion" from the war on terror and "the battle against our greatest enemy: Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network." According to the senator, "the president's failures in Iraq have made us weaker, not stronger, in the war on terrorism. That is the hard truth. The president refuses to acknowledge it. But terrorism experts around the world do." In Kerry's eyes, President Bush's ineptitude in Afghanistan and Iraq has allowed al Qaeda to spread, "with thousands of militants plotting and planning in 60 countries, forging new relationships with at least 20 extremist groups in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia."

Now, leaving aside whether the war in Iraq is a distraction from the war on terror, are Kerry, Clarke, and it appears many if not most of the journalists on the terrorism beat and their official sources correct in their now-reflexive assumption that the war in Iraq has spurred a new generation of Islamic extremists to attack the United States? Probably not. One has to say "probably" since the answer is empirical: Not enough time has passed since March 2003 for scholars, journalists, and writers to travel among Islamic militants to get an accurate idea of what is actually happening in mosques and religious schools in the greater Middle East and Europe—the two primary breeding grounds for the jihadism of 9/11.

Remarkably little field work in the stamping grounds and intellectual factories of Islamic militancy has been published since the invasion of Iraq. Just think back to Jeffrey Goldberg's illuminating pre-9/11 essay in the *New York Times* magazine on the Haqqania madrassa outside of Peshawar. The director of central intelligence George Tenet loved this piece—which ran under the headline "Inside Jihad U.: The Education of a Holy Warrior"—and he strongly recommended it, say CIA officers, to the staff at Langley. The Haqqania madrassa was the primary incubator for Afghanistan's Taliban elite.

Can anyone recall a comparable

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piece about Pakistan's militant madrassas since March 2003? Now, these institutions may be churning out a new, more virulent generation of Afghan-Pakistani holy warriors, but at this time, we just don't know. Information from Pakistani intelligence and the Pakistani press has been historically unreliable. Our knowledge of the official and unofficial madrassa system in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Yemen is even more sparse. And in Western Europe, we are probably only a little better off.

Even in France, where there are multiple layers of potentially very intrusive and competent police and domestic intelligence, the knowledge of what is transpiring in the country's numerous semi-official mosques probably isn't comforting to the Interior Ministry. One of the principal reasons why interior ministers have for years pushed for the local education of French-born imams is that they fear the influence of imported militant clerics. They also know that once extremists enter the bloodstream of the French Muslim community, it's difficult to monitor, and very difficult to circumscribe, their influence. Despite the omnipresent police, France is a free society, and most mosques and Muslim religious associations are pretty tight-knit communities, often opaque to even the inquisitive efforts of the internal-security service, the DST.

Our lack of knowledge is particularly unsettling when we look at groups that have operationally and philosophically melded into al Qaeda. These are groups whose members see themselves first in a holy war against the United States, and only secondarily, if at all, in a war against the Westernizing Muslim dictators, who are often U.S.-supported. The fundamentalist struggle against local despots—the anathematizing of Muslims as infidels because of their political allegiances and actions—is decades old, and predates contemporary Middle Eastern anti-Americanism and its usual corollary, anti-Zionism. We don't really have a good idea of whether the extremist Algerian group the GSPC (from the French *Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat*) has become a more vibrant, seductive organization since it joined forces with al Qaeda in the mid- to late 1990s. Even the hyper-energetic French counterterrorist judge Jean-Louis Bruguière couldn't tell you whether GSPC members had a good recruiting month in France in September 2004. As he probably couldn't tell you how they fared in September 1998 or September 2001. Any DST officer who tells you he has a baseline for GSPC or al Qaeda recruiting in France for any year since al Qaeda established a meaningful presence in Western Europe sometime in the late 1990s is either pulling your leg, fibbing, or both. In all probability, the numbers are so small that the only way you could know is for the principal GSPC or al Qaeda representative in a given European country to tell you. (It is possible that the arrests of Muslim militants made in Europe since 9/11 have given European security services a better idea of the numbers involved, but given the nature of the Muslim community in Europe—a community living largely apart from their non-Muslim compatriots—the element of doubt remains large.)

Which of course provokes the question: How in the world can so many American officials and journalists be so certain that the Iraq war has made al Qaeda a stronger, more deadly, more seductive organization?

To repeat: It's possible. There are numerous factors that go into the brew that makes Muslim jihadists. These factors are not the same for everyone. The intellectual matrix of young Muslim men who live to die to express their own devotion to God and his community is surely one of the most dark, fascinating, and urgent questions before us. The role of *ghulat*—those who go beyond the accepted customs and practices of the Muslim community—is not new in Islamic history, though the component parts of today's al Qaeda holy-warrior mind are different in many ways from what we've seen among radical Shiite jihadists and the Sunni holy warriors of just a generation ago. But the suggestion that the Iraq war is the driving force in creating a new generation of faithful terrorists belittles all of the domestic factors that have been fueling Sunni fundamentalism since World War I.

Past and present Westernizing Middle Eastern dictatorships, and the cultural dynamics they unleashed, have been *the* catalyst for Islamic militancy in the Middle East (the situation is a bit more complicated in the Muslim communities of Europe, which increasingly generate their militants from strictly European causes). Could the Iraq war be the one factor that tips a prospective holy warrior into a committed jihadist, willing to abandon his family and die for the cause? Sure. But a vast array of other factors also come into play, causes that Egypt's president-for-life Hosni Mubarak or France's Jacques Chirac might prefer not to discuss.

What we do know: Al Qaeda was born and grew rapidly in a time when the United States was ignoring Afghanistan, wasn't occupying Iraq, and was committed to negotiating Palestinian nationalist and religious aspirations through the Oslo Accords. We know that Osama bin Laden used as a tocsin call American retreats from the Middle East; that the defining moment for him, and perhaps for his movement, was President Clinton's "Black Hawk Down" withdrawal from Somalia.

We know that Osama bin Laden, his number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other much more respectable members of the Sunni Muslim community have called for the streets to rise in the Middle East against the infidel American invaders. Yet the streets have been, once again, mostly quiet (despite the Westerner-paid opinion polls that tell us how much the average Muslim man hates the United States). In a newspaper or magazine article we get a quick quote from some European intelligence official telling us that al Qaeda has been revitalized by the American

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invasion, but what we don't see or hear, at least not yet, are European officials and responsible academics who actually visit the Muslim communities they write about, screaming over the postwar radical deluge. (And we *would* hear the Europeans, particularly the French and the Germans, frantically pressing this with U.S. officials and reporters, yet all seems rather quiet.)

Now for what we *are* beginning to see in the Middle East: The Iraq war has intellectually convulsed the region. The war and President Bush's statements about the need for greater democracy in the Middle East have provoked a vibrant conversation about democracy in the region and in the influential Arabic press published in London. This conversation is still in its infancy, but the range of the discussion, and the extent to which even the controlled presses in dictatorships have been forced to engage it, are impressive.

Anyone who has spent much time watching Arabic television knows how hard the satellite channels have tried to depict the Iraqi resistance as a national, fraternal affair even though the vast majority of Iraqis—the Kurds and the Arab Shia—have not joined in action or sympathy the Arab Sunni insurgents. This line doesn't quite ring true, and the Arab journalists and guests often have a hard time tiptoeing around the obvious—that the vast majority of Iraqis do not look upon the war as illegal, immoral, or a great geostrategic blunder. Serious discussions have started in the Arab press about the savagery of some of the Iraqi insurgents, about how they kill more Iraqis than they do Americans. Bombings of Arab Christian churches and all of the beheadings have caused some soul-searching, even among Islamic activists.

Granted, it is too soon to know how this will play out. In the end, particularly if the United States precipitously withdraws from Iraq, we may discover that al Qaeda has been born again, vastly stronger than it was before. We may discover that the Iraq war was a fillip to al Qaeda—but also to the spread of democracy throughout the region, which will kill off the fundamentalist mainspring for bin Ladenism, provided fundamentalists are allowed to compete at the urns. We may find out that Arab Muslims are not as monolithic as John Kerry and Richard Clarke think they are, and that Hosni Mubarak's Egypt and Crown Prince Abdullah's Saudi Arabia remain the real magnets for holy warriors in the Muslim world. We may discover that the Iraq war, much more than the vanquishing of the Taliban, was the beginning of the end of the regimes that gave us 9/11. We need to be patient. It's just too soon to tell. ♦

Courting the Gay Vote

What John Kerry told the *Advocate*.

BY JEFFREY BELL & FRANK CANNON

If President Bush is reelected, it's a good bet that the bloodiest fight of his fifth year in office will have nothing to do with the war or the economy. It will be over the filling of one or more vacancies on the Supreme Court.

If Sen. John Kerry is elected, suspense will quickly drain away from the future of the court. This is true even if the court's nine members, eight of them now 65 or older, confound expectations by staying where they are for another year or two. Because even without turnover, at least five members of the present court will undoubtedly interpret the election of John Kerry as a mandate to complete the social revolution they and other judges have begun.

In the context of a Kerry presidency, there will be five solid votes to throw out Congress's ban on partial-birth abortion. There are five justices who made it fairly clear last term, when they set aside on a technicality Michael Newdow's challenge to the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, that the right case might well leave the deity considerably more vulnerable.

And, above all, the election of John Kerry will almost certainly mean that six justices would feel free to overturn the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, clearing the way for same-sex marriage to spread from state to state under the Constitution's "full faith and credit" clause. After all, as one of 14 senators to vote against DOMA on final passage, Kerry attacked the Clinton-signed legislation as unconstitutional and as "gay bashing."

Advocates of same-sex marriage would then be relieved of the need to win even one victory in a referendum or state legislature. More than enough judges at the state level would see to that. As we recently learned in Louisiana, state judges are standing by to invalidate popular reaffirmations of traditional marriage even in states where it commands 78 percent of the votes.

Of course, John Kerry has campaigned this year as an opponent of same-sex marriage. More than once, he has said he agrees with the president on that. More than once, he has said he agrees with voters in Missouri and other states who have carved marriage between a man and a woman

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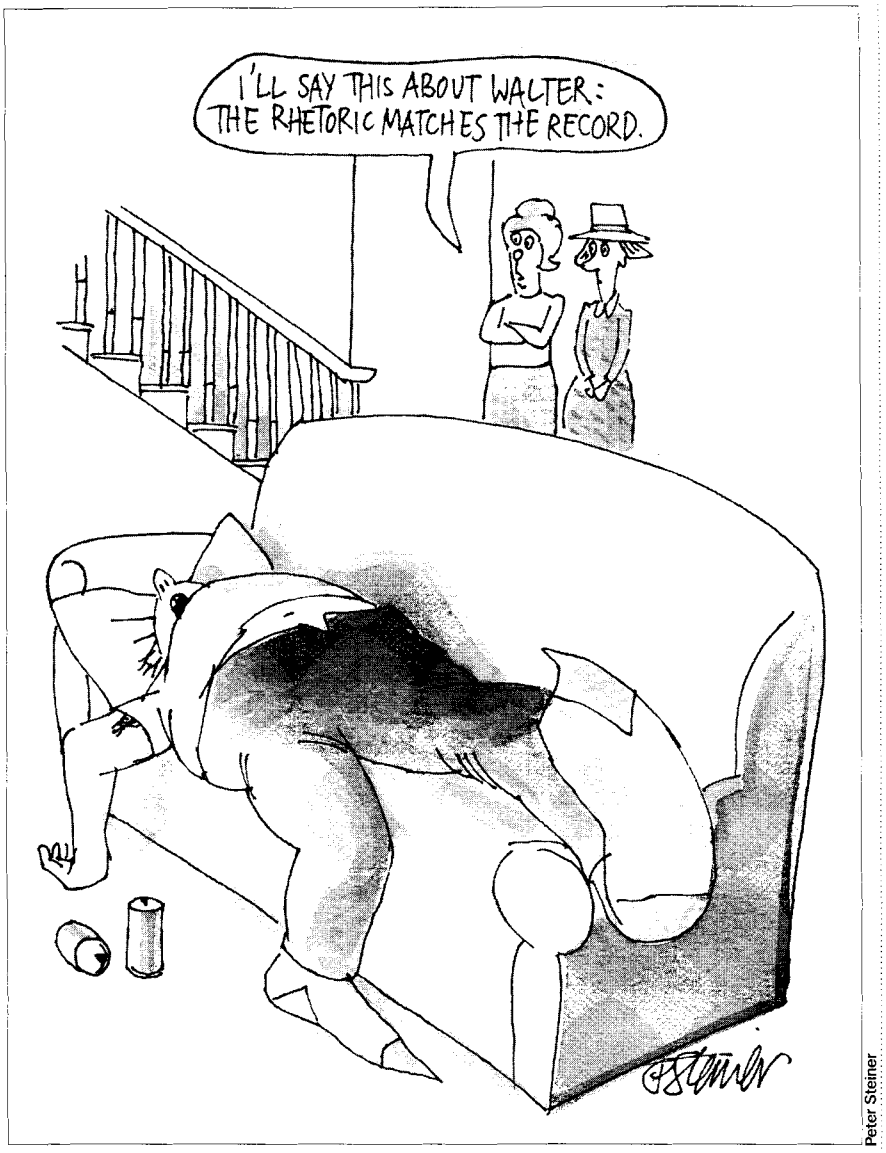

Peter Steiner

into their state constitutions in order to fend off hovering judicial elites. Will those same judicial elites feel free to proceed on their project even if the only prominent candidate who supports same-sex marriage, Ralph Nader, is held to 1 or 2 percent of the national vote?

Such questions are nearly as irrelevant to the judicial revolutionaries as those musty old arguments about whether writers of constitutions, federal or state, intended in their wildest dreams to mandate same-sex marriage. This issue is far from settled even assuming a Bush victory in the election, and subsequent Bush victories in bloody Supreme Court confirmation battles. But legal and judicial elites understand that the election of John Kerry will signal irrevocable victory for the liberal social agenda, most certainly including same-sex marriage.

Kerry clearly wants it that way. The tipoff is in the October 26 issue of the *Advocate*, the country's leading gay magazine, in a combined profile and interview titled "Kerry's Plan for Gay America."

If you have paused to marvel that such an article is appearing on newsstands little more than a week before the election, you are in good company. The *Advocate*'s profiler/interviewer, Chad Graham, writes that while the last three Democratic nominees, Bill Clinton twice and Al Gore, sat down for interviews in their election years, "Kerry is the only one with the mettle to do it this close to an election. Bill Clinton and Al Gore spoke with the magazine months before facing voters on Election Day. Kerry speaks to us in an issue that will reach readers mere days before November 2."

In the interview, Kerry repeats his opposition to same-sex marriage in language that can generously be described as cryptic: "I have my view, and my view is my view." Why, then, should gays come out to vote for the Kerry-Edwards ticket?

"If they think that they want a Supreme Court with more justices like Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia," Kerry replies, "then they should stay home. If they want a Court appointed by John Kerry that's going to fight for equality in America and the fair interpretation of the equal protection clause and due process, this is the most important election of our lifetime."

The passage beginning "fair interpretation" is of course the signal: Kerry's Supreme Court appointees, he is saying, will have views similar to those that led the Massachusetts high court to mandate gay marriage in Kerry's home state earlier this year. This should be posted next to Kerry's "litmus test" for judges on upholding *Roe* v. *Wade*, affirmed by the senator under Bush's challenge in the third presidential debate on October 13. This would enable the second Roman Catholic president, John F. Kerry, to continue to hold as a personal view his belief that marriage is between a man and a woman, just as he honors the church teaching that human life begins at conception, while at the same time blackballing any future judge who might vote against abortion or same-sex marriage as mandated constitutional law.

Even with a Bush victory on November 2, then, the revolutionary agenda of judicial elites is very far from being thwarted. A Kerry victory means that enactment of the judge-made marriage revolution is only a matter of time. ♦

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Kerry's Brief Non-Liberal Moment

He once held a heterodox view about affirmative action—but not for long. **BY TERRY EASTLAND**

"LET'S GO to a new question for you, Senator Kerry," said Bob Schieffer of CBS in the final debate. It was indeed a new question, for the trio of debates as well as for the long campaign. And because you might have missed the answer—the fact-checkers, analysts, and pundits sped right past it—let's repeat the question: "Affirmative action: Do you see a need for affirmative action programs or have we moved far enough along that we no longer need to use race and gender as a factor in school admissions and federal and state contracts and so on?"

"No, Bob, regrettably, we have not moved far enough along," said Kerry, who proceeded to blame the Bush administration for impeding progress. Citing his experience on the Senate's Small Business Committee, Kerry said, "We have a goal there for minority set-aside programs," but the administration hasn't reached "those goals" and has even tried to "undo" them.

Kerry was referring to programs in which the government awards contracts after taking race and sex, as the euphemism goes, into account. In fact, the administration has continued without important change the various preferential programs built up since the 1970s that govern federal contracting and—far from working to undo those programs—has vigorously defended them in the courts. Moreover, in 2003, the government exceeded the statutory goal for the percentage of all federal contracts to be awarded to "small disadvantaged businesses." The 2003 goal was 5 percent, and, according to a spokesman for the Small Business Administration, 7 percent of the contracts went to small disadvantaged enterprises.

But no matter: Kerry's aim was to make George W. Bush the enemy of affirmative action while touting himself as its true champion. Kerry described affirmative action as a policy that "applies" not only to "people of color" but also to women (and thus well more than half the population). He made no distinction between affirmative action of the preferential variety and mere outreach efforts. His answer assumed the preferential kind. And he spoke of it as a means of overcoming discrimination and also of achieving "inclusion." He offered no indication of when such affirmative action might be ended and instead observed that "we have a distance to travel," vowing that "as president, I will make certain we travel it."

The Kerry who answered Schieffer's question was the liberal Kerry. There was a brief—very brief—moment in his career when he offered heterodox views on preferential affirmative action. In the spring of 1992, when New Democrats were seizing the day, with one of their own, Bill Clinton, headed to the party's nomination and, not incidentally, in need of a running mate, Kerry decided to get with the reform agenda. In a 50-minute speech at Yale University titled "Race, Politics, and the Urban Agenda," Kerry said that affirmative action was "an inherently limited and divisive program," that it "has kept America thinking in racial terms," that it promotes "cultural dependency," and that it causes "reverse discrimination." Liberals immediately denounced the speech, and Kerry, who said he should have let friends and supporters vet it beforehand (a sort of global test, even then), quickly ditched his plan to give a series of talks on race and urban America. And if his speech was to have been a prelude to proposing specific changes to affirmative action, he never uttered them, swearing to all comers his steadfast support for the policy. The episode was like others in his career, in which, as David Brooks shrewdly observed in January, Kerry momentarily embraced daring ideas only to abandon them if they threatened core constituencies, whereupon he returned "meekly to the Democratic choir."

Because Nexis has a long memory, Kerry found himself during the primaries having to fight off attacks based on his 1992 remarks. Kerry again vowed his commitment to affirmative action, while claiming that in his 1992 speech he had merely represented what critics of the policy were saying. Kerry's campaign meanwhile issued a press release stating: "In a 1992 speech John Kerry had the courage to stand up for affirmative action and support President Clinton's 'mend it, don't end it'" approach. But "standing up for affirmative action" hardly describes the speech's critical thrust. Nor is it accurate to say that in 1992 Kerry supported "President Clinton" since, to begin with, Clinton was not president in 1992, only a candidate for president.

Kerry did nominally support the "mend it, don't end it" approach once President Clinton announced it—three years later—but even here he dissembled. In his answer to Schieffer, Kerry said, "There were many people, like myself, who opposed quotas, who felt there were places where it was overreaching. So we had a policy called 'mend it, don't end it.' We fixed it." Kerry seems to have projected the Kerry of his 1992 speech onto the fight over affirmative action that occurred in 1995, when the newly Republican Congress considered a

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bill, opposed by Clinton, that was designed to end preferences in all federal programs.

In fact, Kerry didn't take part in the 1995 fight, at least not in the way he described it in his answer to Schieffer, by which a listener might think he objected to quotas or pointed to "places where it was overreaching." Neither did Kerry propose ways to "mend" affirmative action. Nor, of course, had he "fixed it," given that the fixing, what very little of it got done, was done by the executive branch. Indeed, the truth about Clinton's "mend it, don't end it" approach was that, over the objections of a disappointed Democratic Leadership Council which had recommended that preferences in all federal programs be phased out, it preserved the status quo.

Looking at John Kerry on affirmative action, you can spot a flip-flopper, an equivocator, a vain boaster, a fiddler with history, all. But the essential truth is that he has never voted against race-based affirmative action, but always for it. On this issue (as on many others) he is a liberal. Offered a chance to affirm that the policy should not continue indefinitely but at some point be ended, that indeed our country will be better off once all Americans are treated without regard to race and ethnicity, he declined.

Here is where Kerry differs significantly on this issue with Bush, for in the important area of higher education his administration has encouraged colleges and universities to reduce their reliance on race and ethnicity in admissions and other programs, and, indeed, to adopt race-neutral approaches wherever possible. Already the effort has met with success, as witness the elimination of race-exclusive scholarships by a growing number of schools. A Kerry presidency would likely discontinue this effort, even as such a presidency would provoke this question: Where are those New Democrats of yesteryear, those Democrats who once condemned race-conscious preferences and group entitlements, who so eloquently reminded their party of its need to recover core civil rights principles? ♦

For sage election insights, stay closer to home.

Your next issue of *The Weekly Standard* will be printed the day after Election Day—Wednesday, Nov. 3. Naturally, you won't want to look elsewhere for analysis as the finish line approaches, so drop in for up- to-the-minute commentary at our website, ***www.weeklystandard.com.*** Visit early and often!

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Afghanistan Reborn

The epic achievement of the Bush administration—and of America

By Charles H. Fairbanks Jr.

There just was an election in Afghanistan. A democratic election, more or less. American, European, and U.N. observers agreed on this, although it will take two weeks to count all the votes in trackless mountain regions. It may take even longer to investigate possible election violations. Turnout was enormous, defying neo-Taliban violent attempts to prevent voting. The major controversy that arose sprang from election officials' confusion about the indelible ink used to mark the fingers of those who voted; many voters' fingers were marked with ordinary ink that washed off, permitting them to vote again (assuming they were able to produce an unpunched registration card). Anyone who has monitored elections in backward countries will know that such problems are common. Nevertheless, this prompted all 15 of President Hamid Karzai's rivals for the presidency to announce they were boycotting the election, before later backing down.

A Canadian paper, in one of the most negative reports, said "many voters in the [provincial] capital city of Faryab were coerced to vote for General Rashid Dostum, the warlord whose militia has a stronghold in northern Afghanistan." In some areas false ballots were reportedly cast for Karzai, the acting president and frontrunner, by local warlords and officials eager to curry favor with him, reflecting the same zeal that resulted in 170 percent registration in Paktia province. Knight Ridder reported that many villages were like the one in "the Shomali Plain, north of the capital Kabul, [where] male-dominated traditions, high illiteracy rates and tribal allegiances conspired to silence the voices of thousands of Afghans, especially women, who'd been eager to vote." But overall, as even a French leftist paper had to confess, "In spite of some cases of fraud, the first free presidential election took place Saturday without major incident and with massive participation." As Donald Rumsfeld said, "It's breathtaking."

Five years ago, even a half-free election would have seemed wildly improbable in Afghanistan. Of all the ancient Muslim lands, Afghanistan was, with Yemen and Oman before oil, the most medieval. The first public dropping of the veil—a real, all-concealing *burka*, not the flirtatious little compromise the Islamists now label *hijab*—took place in 1959, a century after the women of Cairo and Istanbul began to wear Paris fashions. At the end of the 1970s the Afghan Communists—the 2 percent of atheists in a very Muslim country—seized power. Resistance emerged all over, the Soviet Union invaded, and the country was engulfed in 20 years of war. The Soviet garrisons soon retreated to the major cities, and the even more primitive rural areas were left to develop in fundamentalist isolation, punctuated by Soviet forays destroying everything in their path.

Early in this extended period of violence, almost the entire trained and Westernized elite fled the country, leaving it essentially without technical experts. What little modern infrastructure existed—roads, irrigation canals, coal mines, factories, schools—was obliterated bit by bit; it was a major feat for the Taliban to restore the electricity in one Afghan city. The resistance was magnificent, but it destroyed the fragile unity of Afghanistan, splitting the country along ethnic and Muslim sectarian lines. At its best, the resistance was fueled by fundamentalism, xenophobia, and *jihad*. At its worst, the mujahedeen degenerated into bands of robbers plundering and tormenting the country they had saved from the Soviets.

In the mid-90s, neighboring Pakistan had had enough. Pakistani intelligence, the ISI, organized the Taliban to rein in the disorder, bring Afghanistan under ethnic Pashtun control again, and so restore Pakistan's influence. Pakistan itself was a crucial part of the Taliban and al Qaeda problem. In the late 90s, the Taliban, with Pakistani money and planning, succeeded in conquering the whole country save a few mountain patches where guerrillas of the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance wearily fought on.

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EFE Photos / Syed Jan Sabawoon

Counting votes in Kabul, October 12, 2004

The Taliban, dominated by Pashtun village mullahs without political experience or education, returned to a long tradition of symbiosis between extremist Islamic movements and medieval failing-state structures. Thus, the Taliban added ideological objections to modernity to the already far advanced destruction of modern institutions and infrastructure; it succeeded in eliminating some of the aspects of modern life that survived, such as television. These factors, piled on top of each other, year after year, made Afghanistan perhaps the worst failed state in the world. Every political scientist would have laughed at the idea that such a country could be a candidate for democratic regime change. I certainly did.

As Afghanistan descended into civil war between mujahedeen factions, the first Bush administration was faced with a decision about whether to continue trying to influence the country's evolution or to give up. The U.S. government gave up, echoing the realist consensus of the foreign policy establishment. Only Vice President Dan Quayle objected at the meeting where the final choice was made. Such a choice was entirely in accord with a 60-year tradition by which American foreign policy assumed that "vital interests" flow only from national power, wealth, and resources, not from their absence. Accordingly, the first post-Cold War decade issued in innumerable lists, prepared by Washington think tanks, classifying every part of the world under "vital interests," "important interests," and "peripheral interests." Afghanistan rarely figured. So it continued as a failed state, on a path that led to the training of thousands of jihadis on its soil, as well as the planning and ordering of the 9/11 attacks. When the Taliban state found itself without sufficient revenue, trained experts, or zealous soldiers, it turned to its ideological soul mate, al Qaeda.

Afghanistan became a base for international terrorism for a number of reasons. The first prerequisite, of course, was the existence of a network of international terrorist groups. To operate freely, these groups needed someplace as strange as Taliban Afghanistan. It was not a state in the sense of modern international law, with "sovereignty" over an entire territory, and a monopoly of armed force within precise borders. The multinational military and terrorist units that the Taliban had welcomed, such as al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, obviously limited its sovereignty. Only after the war did we realize that the Taliban in fact needed these units, because the regime had no regular army or any legal procedure for calling up citizens to serve. Instead, youths were grabbed on the streets and forced into army units. The existence of an unresolved struggle for control of the country tremendously weakened the international pressures that act to normalize states—persuading them to accept international norms of behavior, to take responsibility for what happens on their territory, and to expel criminals and terrorists. The terms "weak state" and "failed state" are not really adequate to describe this phenomenon. What is plain is that before 9/11 and George W. Bush, public discussion of the goals of our foreign policy was far too concerned with strong states that might be rivals, and not

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enough concerned with dangers that arise from weakness.

It may also be true that terrorist groups like that of Osama bin Laden could not operate without a third precondition: support, direct or indirect, from powerful, competent states, such as Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In situations of unresolved conflict or semi-statehood, as in Afghanistan, these patron states can maneuver freely and deniably. Frequently such patron states operate not to strengthen failing states, but to keep them weak and dependent.

Then, from this Afghanistan, America was struck in our homeland, for the first time seriously since 1941. To respond effectively required not just war plans—which usually take years to prepare—but a departure from a foreign policy tradition taken for granted for two generations. This was the administration's first great challenge.

Meeting it was Bush's first great feat. The administration then realized the crucial function the Taliban performed for al Qaeda, and the crucial function Pakistan performed for the Taliban. Having seen this, Bush rapidly identified the need to overthrow the Taliban, not just intimidate it, and understood that the failing character of its state could be exploited. Somewhat later the administration came to see that if another failed state were left in the Taliban's place, the problem would repeat itself. Moreover, the administration realized that the United States would need bases in Pakistan and in Central Asia.

Bush's second feat was to grasp at once the need to wage war, to achieve victory by destroying the enemy's capacity to fight, and not just trifle with the kind of "coercive diplomacy" employed long ago against North Vietnam and more recently against Serbia. To appreciate the magnitude of Bush's achievement one has to step back and consider the long, slow process of historical change since 1918. In the twentieth century, a series of exhausting wars turned the developed countries against war itself, while the risks of nuclear weapons during the Cold War channeled conflict into lower-level struggles, often undeclared, in what came to be called the Third World. In wide areas, such as Europe and North America, it eventually became hard to imagine war. Overall, this development is a blessing to mankind, but it removes a potent instrument from those available to statesmen. After 9/11, Bush could have continued the now comfortable approach of turning to one of the beguiling substitutes for war. Instead, the president decisively defined his response to 9/11 as a "war on terrorism." The administration has been censured for lumping together unrelated terrorist and insurgent movements for diverse goals, and in cases such as Chechnya this criticism has some merit. But to declare a "war on terrorism" was by far the easiest way of mobilizing the U.S. government, other governments, and the public in a decisive effort against new dangers. The very diffuseness of the threats was a reason to adopt a conceptual means of aggregating them. We do not know that any other approach could have worked.

On October 7, 2001, President Bush began his military campaign against the Taliban's Afghanistan—in the shadow of tremendous difficulties. The United States neither shared a border with Afghanistan nor could get there by sea, and no war had ever been successful without these preconditions. We had no friends, having dishonorably abandoned the Afghans who'd fought the last great battle of the Cold War for us. And Afghan history suggested a deeper problem.

All the armies that had ever occupied it (most recently the British in 1839 and 1877-80 and the Soviet army after 1979) had triggered the xenophobia of the Afghans and been ousted, or had left early for fear of Afghan reaction. On top of this, the Bush administration had little intelligence on Afghanistan and no plans for dealing with it, except small covert schemes, all dismissed as impracticable, to snatch Osama bin Laden and modestly aid the Northern Alliance, the only foes who still held out. War plans are so complex that they usually take years to prepare, time that Bush did not have. American forces, structured as they were for fighting massive Soviet or North Korean attacks, were not appropriate to the task in Afghanistan. Moreover, the United States had never developed much capability to fight a "proxy war" by aiding indigenous forces. This struggle was neither diplomatic nor military, but both inextricably mingled; such wars are notoriously the hardest to fight.

All these obvious difficulties hung over the black, impenetrable future as Bush gave the order to begin. He knew he was taking huge risks. Those who make the facile case that Afghanistan was the necessary and proper war while Iraq was "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time" glibly ignore the risks Bush took in doing anything in Afghanistan.

The first step in waging the Afghan war was to neutralize the enemy's allies and acquire allies and bases for ourselves. To wage war on the Taliban, it was essential not just to shift, but to *reverse* the alignment of Pakistan, an enormous challenge. Pakistan was the Taliban's organizer and patron, while friction and sanctions over nuclear weapons, Islamization, human rights, and democracy had distanced the United States from our old ally. Moreover, Pakistan was itself a failing state, unstable politically, with vocal and rancorous Muslim extremist groups having deep roots both in the society and in the army. American military action or excessive pressure risked shattering the country's precarious order and bringing down the mili-

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tary government, with the extremists poised to take over or to submerge our anti-Taliban effort in wider chaos.

By sending Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to Pakistan's military boss, General Pervez Musharraf, with essentially an ultimatum—making big threats and promises, and postponing all secondary issues—President Bush was able to reverse Pakistan's entire foreign policy. Musharraf shifted in a few days from ally and sustainer of the Taliban to our ally, providing bases and intelligence, and turning over many al Qaeda leaders including eventually the planner of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Not since 1939 has world politics seen a reversal of alliances so sudden and stupefying.

Since the Iraq war, there has been endless whimpering about President Bush's arrogant refusal to line up allies. Somehow Pakistan is never mentioned. Pakistan was the indispensable ally to deal with Afghanistan and al Qaeda, and simultaneously the ally hardest to win. Bush won this ally. (He also won Central Asian bases and cooperation, much against the wishes of regionally dominant Russia and China.) In fact, President Bush converted Pakistan from probably the most important state sponsor of terrorism in the world to a major partner in the war against terrorism. There are incessant complaints that Pakistan's cooperation is not wholehearted, and in themselves some of these may be justified. But as so often with criticisms of established policy, proper criticism tends to omit the entire background that makes everything else possible. Any cooperation out of Pakistan at all—much less the extensive cooperation we now enjoy—is an enormous asset. That we have it is not good fortune, but the result of a titanic effort of will on the part of President Bush's team.

The Military Campaign. The drama of Pakistan's reversal of roles can most readily be seen in conventional military terms. The Taliban's best forces were largely deployed against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan's Northeast, on the far side of the massive Hindu Kush mountain range. These forces relied on a long supply line that wound southwest, around the mountains, and then east again into the Taliban's Pashtun heartland. By the sudden, unexpected *volte-face* of Pakistan, President Bush took the Taliban on its unprotected, tender flank. The medieval Taliban fighters had relied on Pakistan for most of their financial and technological support, logistics, and operational planning. All this they suddenly lost, creating deep anxiety in the minds of the Taliban that goes far to explain their swift collapse.

American strategy then turned to the destruction of al Qaeda and Taliban assets by long-range, precise air attack. The same accuracy enabled these attacks to largely avoid killing civilians and wrecking their homes. None of this was easy, because the use of airpower normally requires a vast logistics and basing infrastructure to keep the planes in the air. The Bush administration had to improvise, which is not the American "way of war." Pilots used to 90-minute training flights found themselves flying seven-hour missions from carriers in the North Arabian Sea, refueling six times in the air.

The continuing and apparently inconclusive air war produced, by early November, criticism as intense as Bush now faces on Iraq. A host of military experts like the University of Chicago's John Mearsheimer decried "massive military force" as something that "makes the problem worse." Bruce Ackerman, a law and political science professor at Yale, argued that "our international problems are utterly intractable, and the sooner we recognize this, the better. . . . We should figure out clever ways to declare victory at the first decent opportunity and remove our troops."

On the ground, the CIA and State Department were most comfortable working with Afghanistan's Pashtun ethnic group, usually with and through Pakistan. The Tajiks and Uzbeks of the Northern Alliance, however, had the only substantial forces in the field against the Taliban. About two weeks into the campaign, the National Security Council boldly decided to give more help to the Northern Alliance, in return for a promise that it would not enter Kabul. U.S. Forward Air Observers were sent to join the Northern Alliance troops, B-52s were ordered in, and the bombing of the Taliban front lines began. The United States arranged for exiled Northern Alliance warlords to return to the tribal areas, stirring up rebellion, and bought ethnic Pashtun warlords in the south. These new measures produced a swift reversal in the ground war. The Taliban lost Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Taliqan, Herat, Jalalabad, and Kabul in quick succession. Al Qaeda's forces fled east to Tora Bora and then to sanctuaries in the ungoverned Tribal Areas across the Pakistani frontier. As most Taliban troops simply ran away, their leadership retreated to their original center around Kandahar. U.S. forces occupied a base in the desert south of Kandahar in late November, and began to surround the city with American, coalition, and Afghan warlord forces. On December 7, the Taliban were forced to abandon Kandahar, their last stronghold. For the first time in history, a distant, landlocked country had been conquered by air, covert action, and proxy forces alone.

The brilliant performance of the Bush administration must be traced ultimately to the president's desperate sense of urgency after 9/11. Bush and his team felt they had to conquer the terrorists' sanctuary before they struck again. That urgency now pervades Bush's wider war on

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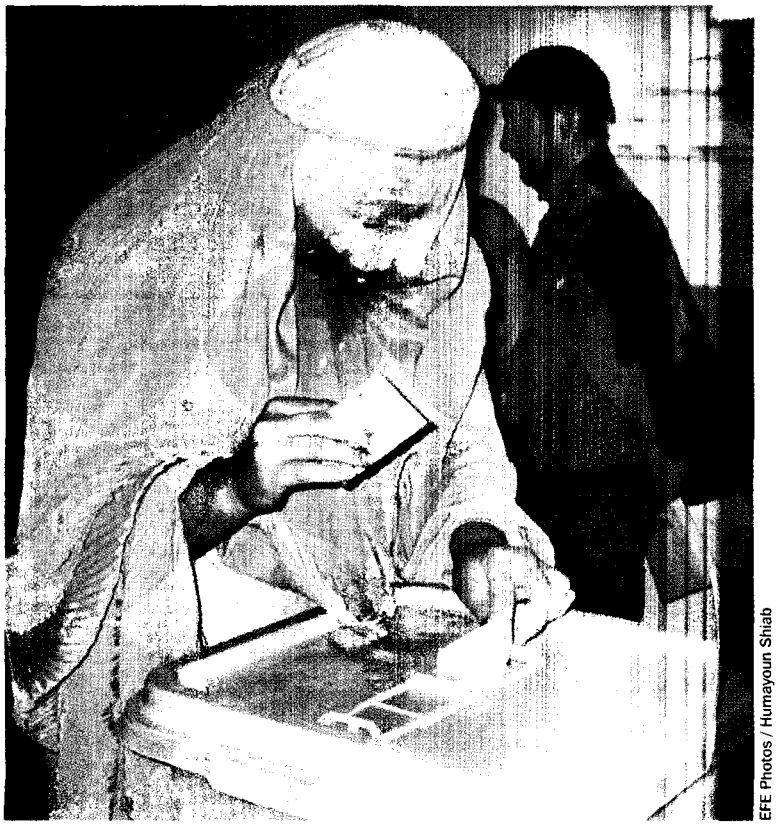

EFE Photos / Humayoun Shiab

Voting in Kandahar province, once a Taliban stronghold

terrorism. Can we hope for a similar spirit from John Kerry? The urgency—and it seems very real—that fuels his supporters is an urgent need to *reverse* what they see as Bush's distortions of U.S. foreign policy.

The pace and improvised character of this amazing victory left Afghanistan's future stability in great doubt. Breaking their promise (with Russian support), Northern Alliance forces occupied Kabul on November 13 and began filling government positions with their ethnic kin. They gave the three most important ministries to three Tajiks from the same village in the Panjshir valley: Muhammad Fahim at Defense, Abdullah Abdullah at Foreign Affairs, and Yunis Qanuni at Interior, controlling the police. Well into 2002, more than 90 percent of the generals in the new Afghan National Army were Tajiks. Panjshiri Tajik domination of Afghanistan was inherently fragile: The Pashtuns, who had dominated Afghanistan from the 18th century to the Soviet invasion, were unlikely to accept it. For America, the danger lay in the fact that the Taliban had been a Pashtun movement; exclusion of the Pashtuns from the new arrangements was certain to revive the Taliban.

It is the very nature of war to set in motion an immense, indiscriminate process, like an avalanche. The United States did not join World War II intending to leave the Red Army on the Elbe or to weaken the last of the European great powers and inherit their role. To achieve the aim of victory, a power that unleashes war is compelled to accept many other consequences it did not seek. Most of all, the unpredictability of war flows from its nature as the only human activity where another side is trying to the death to prevent you from achieving your aims. The United States could chase al Qaeda from its Taliban sanctuary—and do so quickly, before another 9/11 attack—only by helping the Northern Alliance win. Then it was faced with Northern Alliance domination of Kabul, a lesser problem, but one that could gradually unravel everything achieved.

The best the United States could do at that point was (1) establish an international peacekeeping force, ISAF, that would act as a politically neutral source of order in the Afghan capital; (2) mobilize the international community behind a somewhat more balanced interim government and a process to create a still better one; and (3) mobilize the Afghan diaspora in the United States, a huge resource but one made up of individuals rather different from the newly medievalized society to which they returned. Throughout the Afghan war and the postwar reconstruction, the United States operated with support from a coalition. As of mid-2002, the troops protecting Afghanistan's peace included Americans, British, Germans, Danes, Canadians, Norwegians, Australians, and New Zealanders. Crucial support came from international forces stationed at the bases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, forces of the United States, France, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, and South Korea. Pakistan, Oman, Britain, and Turkey—as well as Saudi Arabia and the UAE (both pried away from friendship with the Taliban by Bush)—gave crucial bases for Afghan operations. It was and is a truly international effort.

One side effect of international consensus was that no one party could control the normalization process. From the international conference in Bonn in December 2001 there emerged a complex process that was to begin with a Tajik-dominated Interim Administration. Bush, dealing from a weak hand on the ground, was able to keep our options open for the future by insisting on a largely unknown but CIA-connected Pashtun, Hamid Karzai, as chairman of the Interim Administration, and distributing some ministries to each of the Afghan factions. The U.N.-sponsored "Bonn Process" envisioned appointed commissions, then a Loya Jirga (a traditional quasi-consensus, but not democratic, process) that would choose a Transitional Administration, followed by another Loya Jirga to write a constitution, all leading up to democratic parliamentary and presidential elections in June 2004. These interim, transitional, and final governments with their assemblies, bureaucratic commissions, and democratic elections were amazingly unreal in the absence of any Afghan state, with warlords ignoring Kabul and living by the gun.

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Democracy as the expected outcome seemed utopian to me at the time, and to many others. But this Bonn democratization process did not reflect the arrogant imposition of any "Wolfowitz strategy" by the Bush administration. When an "international community" that exists only nominally undertakes to impose political order in strife-torn lands, disagreeing about every political issue but united by the demand that the formula produced have some sort of legitimacy, democracy is by far the most likely outcome. Since the collapse of the contending Communist ideology, modern liberal democracy has become a kind of "default regime." The word "democracy" has come to stand for many inchoate aspirations to live a normal, prosperous life, as people in real democracies do. Bush's Greater Middle East Initiative simply applies this reality in a region where it has long been disregarded.

EFE Photos / Humayoun Shiab

An Afghan policeman accompanies a U.N. poll worker in Kandahar province.

Among educated Pashtuns, particularly in the diaspora, the ethnic imbalance in the government permitted by the Bush administration produced a swell of support for the restoration of the old Pashtun king, Zahir Shah, deposed in 1973. The first opportunity for a mid-course correction presented itself with the "Emergency Loya Jirga" in June 2002. It is painful to recall that the United States allowed the dissident Pashtun delegates to be harassed by Northern Alliance secret policemen; the supporters of the king, including the finance minister, were punished by their ouster from the cabinet. President Karzai, with support from the U.S. government, was able to obtain Ashraf Ghani, a resident of Washington and highly professional longtime official of the World Bank, as the new finance minister. Karzai was officially blessed as transitional president, and Yunis Qanuni, one of the Northern Alliance triumvirate that had dominated the government, was ousted from the Ministry of Interior, to be replaced by a follower. The 2002 Loya Jirga was the nadir of American influence after the overthrow of the Taliban. It is not wrong to say that the Bush administration made many mistakes in Afghanistan, as in Iraq. But it also corrected them relatively quickly. Perhaps that is the best that can be done in a war of this kind.

After the Loya Jirga, with active operations against al Qaeda and the Taliban still going on, Afghan experts outside and inside our government grew more and more troubled by the specter of Afghan instability. The fundamental problems were Northern Alliance domination of Kabul, the confinement of the new government's authority and ISAF's mandate to Kabul, and the domination of the rest of Afghanistan by warlords who were loathed by the bulk of the population for their exactions and arbitrariness. The government did not receive customs revenues from important ports of entry, such as Herat, controlled by the puritanical fundamentalist warlord Ismail Khan. The Karzai government had begun building a national army, but most military potential was in the hands of mujahedeen groups that obeyed their warlords and sometimes fought with each other. And, as could be expected, the Taliban and all the groups injured by its fall began a slow, stumbling recovery; guerrilla activity dubiously lumped together as "neo-Taliban" began to grow in the Pashtun south and east. The great danger was that the vast mass of now disenfranchised Pashtuns might eventually join them.

Outside the U.S. government, the problems were diagnosed and the case for a more assertive American policy made effectively by Marin Strmecki, vice president of the Smith Richardson Foundation, and Ali Ahmad Jalali, a former professional officer in the Afghan Royal Army who had risen to head the Persian Service of the Voice of America. Inside the government, awareness of the unsolved problems also grew. Perhaps the first sign of evolving U.S. policy was the declared willingness to expand the international peacekeeping force beyond Kabul, and the U.S. forces' establishment of small posts called PRTs in the provinces early in 2003.

Learning from Mistakes and Getting Serious. Secretary Rumsfeld's visit to Afghanistan in April 2003 seems to have brought the policy initiatives brewing within the government to fruition. In June 2003 President Bush decided on a new, serious effort to deal with the gathering instabilities. For the sake of bureaucratic peace, the policy was hardly highlighted when it was made public in September, and as a result we approach a decisive election with little public awareness of what President Bush's strategy is, or why it has been so successful.

The complexity of the new policy can be brought

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under two broad headings: increasing the legitimacy of the central government and changing the balance of power in the country. Toward the first objective, a core of the policy was achieving reasonable ethnic balance, above all in the cabinet, the army, and the police—giving greater power to the Karzai government. The Panjshiri Tajik minister of interior was dismissed, and replaced by Ali Ahmad Jalali. Half Pashtun and half Tajik, Jalali represents the assimilating character of traditional Afghan officialdom. But more important, Jalali, an American citizen, was willing to work closely with Karzai and U.S. officials to create a multiethnic counterpoise to the Northern Alliance-dominated army and weaken the warlords, whom he could appoint and dismiss as provincial governors. The first governor to be dismissed, in August, was an overbearing Pashtun bandit, Gul Agha Sherzai, in Kandahar province, the home of the Taliban, and he was followed by many others. Emboldened, Karzai and his followers, with American support, forced Minister of Defense Fahim to accept real ethnic balance in army ranks, and new deputies not beholden to Fahim were appointed to ensure it.

The new Afghan National Army had been Fahim's mujahedeen followers with grandiose new titles (one general was actually illiterate) and epaulets, poorly equipped and paid. The changes improved morale, as did the passage in October 2003 of the Bush administration's supplemental budget for Iraq and Afghanistan; the Afghan National Army and Police received $400 million. As multiethnic recruits were retrained and properly paid, the new army gradually became a serious force limiting the power of the Northern Alliance and the provincial warlords. At roughly the same time, American troops began to be deployed more often for strengthening the government, and not exclusively for chasing the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda. European troops took over several of the PRTs in the provinces, which also put warlords on their best behavior. The biggest surprise was some limited success of the program to disarm mujahedeen private armies. Important allies of Marshal Fahim were moved away from Kabul, which diminished their ability to intimidate the formal government. Surprisingly, the Northern Alliance did not resist these changes by force; the power with which the Tajiks had overawed Kabul when the Taliban fled proved puny beside what Karzai and the United States could muster once Bush expressed his determination.

The new balance of power was consecrated by the Constitutional Loya Jirga, postponed from October, which actually met in December 2003. The first battle was over whether Afghanistan should have a parliamentary system, which the Northern Alliance sought, or a presidential system. The new coalition of aggrieved Pashtuns—including the king's supporters, secular modernists, and the general public hoping for order and economic growth—pushed through a victory for a presidential constitution that would empower Karzai. Karzai was also willing to appeal to the Pashtun mujahedeen, who had once been led by Hikmatyar, Khalis, and Sayyaf. All these were quite dubious figures, prompting the International Crisis Group to loftily question "the decision by the pro-Karzai camp to cultivate an ethnic support base" when, they said, "an alternative strategy could have avoided this polarization." Noble words. But can we drag a very traditional Muslim society, made chaotic by foreign and civil war, into modern democracy without employing any techniques from the traditional Afghan repertoire? Hamid Karzai and George W. Bush assumed not. They knew that something terrible would happen unless they exploited *every* opportunity. Does John Kerry know this?

The Constitutional Loya Jirga established the ground rules for the scheduled elections, presidential and parliamentary, in June 2004, with Karzai as the frontrunner. In March, Karzai announced that the presidential election would be postponed until September, then October, and the parliamentary election until Spring 2005. This had the reasonable justification that the remaining powerful warlords would intimidate voters for parliament, but it also strengthened Karzai's position for affecting the parliamentary elections. Coincidentally, it was in September that the last Northern Alliance heavy weapons menacing Kabul were removed under the disarmament program. There is little publicity about some of Karzai's maneuvers in the run-up to the presidential election, and only an Afghan could understand them fully. Karzai succeeded in splitting the ethnic Hazara constituency by selecting Karim Khalili as one of his vice presidents over his own minister of planning, Mohaqqeq, whom he dismissed in March. It seems that Karzai now began playing factions of the Northern Alliance against one another, promising to support the minister of education, Yunis Qanuni, as his new running mate, securing the public support of Rabbani (the father of the Northern Alliance), Foreign Minister Abdullah, and, nominally, Defense Minister Fahim against some other Panjshiri Tajiks.

Meanwhile, Karzai and his allies, with probable American connivance, began developing a threat against the second most powerful warlord, the Iranian-allied fundamentalist Ismail Khan in Herat, by stirring up his neighbor and enemy, the even more disreputable Pashtun warlord Amanullah Khan. Shortly before the election, at a moment when it would have maximum effect, Karzai seized the excuse of a bloody clash between Ismail and Amanullah to dismiss both, moving in fresh Afghan

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National Army and American forces to ensure that his edict was obeyed. This was a vivid demonstration for the warlords, immediately before the October 9 election, of one side of the Karzai presidency—raw power—and a test of the other side, Karzai's appeal to the Afghan public. At about the same time, the strengthened Karzai dropped Yunis Qanuni from his ticket, letting him emerge as the only serious rival for the presidency. Qanuni, however, no longer represented a united Northern Alliance, because Karzai substituted as his running mate a relative of the martyred leader of the Panjshiri Tajik resistance, Ahmed Shah Massoud.

On October 9, Afghans went to the polls. Turnout was enormous, as registration had been after a slow start. Already it seems clear that Karzai won by a substantial margin, after subtracting inevitable fraud both for and against him. He had employed many tricks from the armory of traditional Afghan intrigue to bring him to this point, but apparently without compromising the public's sense that he represented modernity, order, and prosperity. Time will tell whether Karzai's skill in Afghan skullduggery goes to his head, whether disorder spreads or fundamentalism revives, but this outcome is an astonishing victory for democracy.

EFE Photos / Syed Jan Sabawoon

A U.N. worker sorts ballots in Kabul.

The Conditions of Success. What were the preconditions for the triumph in Afghanistan? Surely they must hold lessons not only for the U.S. election, but for Iraq.

First, surely, we must record George W. Bush's will to victory, his sense of urgency, and his tenacity. It was not the media or the American public that repaired Afghanistan when it was drifting slowly toward disorder—we have ears only for what happened yesterday in Iraq. What a reproach! Second, the valor and inventiveness of the American fighting man, who found himself scrambling to win a war he never trained for.

A third absolutely necessary element of our success was our establishment of an Afghan government from almost the moment the Taliban fled. This went three-quarters of the way to neutralizing the Afghans' legendary xenophobia. A local government is always preferable in such a situation, because people enjoy blaming foreigners, but it is indispensable in a Muslim country. Muslims, who regard Islam as the *final* religion, feel a special resentment of non-Muslim rule. Thus in Iraq, the "neoconservative" concept of an initial government headed by an émigré leader like Ahmad Chalabi was fundamentally sensible. Hamid Karzai, a little-known émigré from a subordinate clan of the royal tribe of Pashtuns, seemed little different in January 2002. Indeed, the central error of our policy in Iraq was the supersession of this formula, with the installation of L. Paul Bremer to rule Iraq for two or more years with a vast U.S. bureaucracy. This was not a Bush or conservative formula; the conservative instinct, after the dreary welfare failure, is not to save people but to help them save themselves. As the Georgian thinker Ghia Nodia puts it, an oppressed people need to strengthen their "political muscles" by exercising them. The other formula, the one that crashed in Iraq, represents the consensus of the well-meaning international community: Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor embody it perfectly, and the first two have ended in an interminable malaise.

A fourth precondition of American success in Afghanistan was the willingness to play ethnic politics, and ruthlessly. Karzai was not well known initially, and could easily have been dismissed as an American puppet. But he turned out to be very able, and the raw material he used was the dissatisfaction of the former Pashtun rulers, left out in the cold by the defeat of the Taliban. Karzai was able to build his nominal head of state position into real power step by step because he symbolized the Pashtun role in government; he could bring supporters into government because they were Pashtuns, and Pashtuns

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craved the representation that democratic legitimacy also required. (After winning a free election, Karzai may need to turn his attention to the Tajiks.) Of course, President Bush had to be willing to flex U.S. muscle in Karzai's support. Similarly, in Iraq, we depend absolutely on playing ethnic politics with the Shias. We could lose them if the bizarre idea prevails that any election is invalid if the Sunni minority refuses to vote.

A fifth great contribution was the eventual willingness to use the Afghan diaspora. America finds itself unexpectedly with a quasi-imperial role in the world, and exposed to the resentment this inherently creates. It is not easy to impart to foreign peoples any sense of participation in the remote power that means so much in their lives. Luckily, it is only in America that someone can feel 100 percent American and 100 percent Afghan at the same time. American diasporas, especially the Muslim ones, are now becoming a precious resource, politically Americanized and efficient but possessing local knowledge, languages, and social access that no native American can ever earn. Three American citizens of Afghan birth form today crucial stones in the arch raised by Karzai and Bush: Zalmay Khalilzad, neoconservative strategist and now American ambassador in Kabul; Ashraf Ghani, Johns Hopkins anthropologist turned Afghan minister of finance; and Ali Ahmad Jalali, VOA service chief turned Afghan minister of the interior, with the power to deploy policemen and fire provincial governors. Eventually, we will see a backlash against American, secular, and diaspora influence, but at this stage it is essential.

Sixth and finally, President Bush's democratic objective in Afghanistan was, improbably, a precondition of success. After 25 years of war and degradation, most Afghans wanted what medieval peasants wanted: according to Hippolyte Taine, "a sheepskin coat for winter and not to be killed." In a very traditional society, these inchoate yearnings may not add up to democracy as technically defined, but the prosperous West and its democratic ways represent the direction most people crave. Nor should we dismiss the longing of simple people to determine their own fate. The warlords, including the Northern Alliance, were unable to offer any hope for a better life, and they represented the antithesis of democracy. Democracy provided the formula that united a largely secular Afghan government confined to the island of Kabul with millions of traditional but desperate Afghans of all ethnicities and Muslim schools. It gave President Karzai an appeal that went far beyond his ethnic base. It gave American intentions a legitimacy that transformed our mere power.

It is precisely President Bush's democracy-building agenda, however, that John Kerry attacked in a thematic speech. The election we face shortly will determine not only the will that goes into the war on terrorism, but also the commitment to democratization. After November 2, will America still have a foreign policy that makes our profoundest aspirations a means to our power, and our power a means to good?

As we hurtle toward November 2, our country is divided by a deep and passionate opposition between parties, as bitter as the factional divisions of Cavalier and Puritan so powerfully presented by Macaulay:

> The effect of violent animosities between parties has always been an indifference to the general welfare and honor of the state. A politician, where factions run high, is interested, not for the whole people, but for his own section of it. The rest are, in his view, strangers, enemies, or rather pirates. The strongest aversion which he can feel to any foreign power is the ardor of friendship, compared to the loathing which he entertains toward those domestic foes with whom he is cooped up in a narrow space, with whom he lives in a constant interchange of petty injuries and insults . . .

Strong words. But this election more than anything else is about the conquest of two foreign lands, and the humbling of enemy potentates, a project still messy in many ways, but nevertheless an American *success*, so far, a *victory*—even in Iraq. Yet it is detested by George W. Bush's opponents to the bottom of their souls. So violent are our animosities at this moment that Bush's staggering achievement in Afghanistan is never debated as we approach the vote. It is reminiscent of the postwar debate over "Who lost China?" The passionate partisans who raised this cry in frenzied accusation never reflected: We were debating who lost China only because we had *gained* Japan, South Korea, Germany, Italy, France, and so forth. There seems to be some flaw in our national character, some self-hatred whereby we respond to the complexity of the real world by trying to exorcise the devil within ourselves. And the devil within ourselves we locate soon enough in our neighbor, in the other faction.

Rather than rending our national fabric with self-reproach, Election Day is a moment to take mature satisfaction in our country's real triumphs. In Afghanistan, four short years ago, murders were plotted for the World Trade Center and the Pentagon under the protection of the Afghan government. This year, the plotters and those who protected them have been driven from the country or into remote fastnesses, while vast hordes of Afghans turned out to pay homage to our ideals in a free election. As you part the curtains of your voting booth, remember them. ♦

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Colorado Nightmare

The effort to rewrite the state's Electoral College rules to help Kerry will backfire on Democrats in the long run.

By James Piereson

The controversial conclusion to the 2000 presidential race left most Americans hoping that it would be a long time before the courts again became involved in settling a national election. The Supreme Court's conclusive decision in *Bush* v. *Gore* was handed down only after the Florida Supreme Court had twice intervened to enjoin Florida's secretary of state from certifying the final vote tally until extensive recounts could be completed. Both courts were criticized, with some merit, for tailoring their jurisprudence to fit partisan objectives. Everyone wants to avoid a repeat of the Florida imbroglio—none more than the justices themselves.

But such hopes are likely to be dashed, for *Bush* v. *Gore* established a precedent that is likely to create even more litigation over future elections. The key principle established in that case—that voters have an equal protection right to have their ballots counted according to non-arbitrary standards—will encourage lawsuits over counting mechanisms in any race that is decided within a margin of one or two percentage points. Attorneys for the two parties in the upcoming elections are already preparing motions to take into court as soon as the voting is completed. *Bush* v. *Gore*, moreover, raised a host of legal issues that the Court, because of internal disagreements, could not resolve. These issues are very likely to be raised again—and soon.

One obvious opportunity for litigation arises from a ballot initiative in the state of Colorado that, if approved by the voters on November 2, will amend the state's constitution to eliminate the "winner-take-all" allocation of Colorado's nine electoral votes (a longstanding provision of state law) and instead require a division according to each candidate's proportion of the popular vote. If the initiative passes, Colorado will join Nebraska and Maine as the only three states not to allocate their electoral votes by "winner take all." The Colorado initiative as written would apply to this year's presidential race and to all future races.

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This gambit was concocted by Colorado Democrats as a means of depriving President Bush of four electoral votes he would probably win under the "winner-take-all" rule. Bush carried Colorado by 9 percentage points (51 percent to 42 percent) in 2000, and thus won all nine of the state's electoral votes in a race that he won nationally with only two electoral votes to spare. Current polls have the president leading in Colorado by a margin of between 5 and 10 points, and most observers feel he is likely to carry the state with an advantage somewhere in that range. If that is indeed the outcome, and assuming the ballot proposition passes, the president will take just five electoral votes, with Sen. Kerry taking the other four—an adjustment that could make a large difference in a very close national race.

The ballot proposal has been attacked as a cynical partisan maneuver (which it is) designed to assist the Democratic presidential candidate in a close national race. Critics also point out that, once the voters have approved the measure as part of the state constitution, it can be changed in the future only by constitutional amendment. Thus, in order to undermine President Bush this year, Colorado Democrats will have permanently diluted their state's influence in the Electoral College.

Supporters defend the proposed amendment as a means of calling attention to flaws in the Electoral College. Perhaps, they suggest, the controversy in Colorado will bring greater attention to the fact that the Electoral College does not directly represent the will of the voters. They hope their proposal will thus stimulate sentiment in favor of some kind of direct national vote for president.

This debate over the Electoral College, however, has been underway for many generations, and always intensifies when a national election is close, as happened four years ago. The Colorado proposal is unlikely to add anything constructive to that perennial debate, since its purpose is to provide a quick partisan advantage this year. Indeed, the broader implications of the measure are not especially advantageous to the Democrats who have promoted it.

In any event, the Colorado gambit is unlikely to lead to a change in the Electoral College, since this would require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a step requiring the consent of two-thirds of both houses of Congress and

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three-quarters of the states. Since many groups, and most especially the small states, have a clear interest in maintaining the Electoral College as it is, there is little likelihood that such an amendment will ever pass.

Notwithstanding these claims, many Colorado voters view the measure as a common-sense reform that will bring greater fairness to the electoral vote. A poll taken in September by the *Rocky Mountain News* found the initiative running well ahead, with odds favoring approval. But a strong counterattack in recent weeks appears to have substantially eroded support for the measure. A Mason-Dixon poll conducted in mid-October found the initiative running behind by 44 percent to 35 percent, with a significant number of voters still undecided. Polling on ballot initiatives is an uncertain science, and thus it is hard to predict what the voters will decide on November 2.

Republican governor Bill Owens, a popular two-term incumbent, is leading the opposition to the ballot measure. "If it passes, it will definitely end up in court," *USA Today* quoted him as saying. "If it's a close election, if you thought Florida was messy, wait until you see what happens here." Owens is probably right: If the amendment passes, and if we have a close national election, the question will almost certainly wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The opponents base their legal argument on Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which says, "Each state shall appoint, in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a number of electors, equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives to which the state may be entitled in the Congress." That provision makes it quite clear, some say, that the authority to decide how states allocate their electoral votes rests with the legislature alone, and does not extend to judges, commissions, or voters in ballot initiatives.

This was one of those thorny issues that the Supreme Court addressed in *Bush* v. *Gore* but could not resolve. In the Florida litigation, Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas argued that the Florida Supreme Court, through its intervention in the controversy, had altered the legislative scheme for choosing electors in violation of the Article II, Section 1 provision in the Constitution. Their argument, however, was not accepted by other members of the Court, perhaps because it places limits on the power of the judiciary in settling disputes over electoral votes.

The four liberal justices—Stevens, Breyer, Ginsburg, and Souter—held, in opposition to this, that the delegation of power under the Constitution is to the state and its broad constitutional framework, and not specifically to the legislature. The legislature, after all, is a creature of the state constitution, and operates within a framework of divided powers defined by that instrument. The judicial branch under that system interprets the meaning of statutes and constitutional provisions within the context of actual cases and controversies. These four justices thus argued that the Florida Supreme Court was simply exercising its lawful judicial power when it intervened in the election dispute. The two so-called moderate justices—O'Connor and Kennedy—implicitly concurred with this judgment. Otherwise their two votes would have made a majority for the narrow construction of the Article II provision.

Thus it appears that there are at least six votes on the Supreme Court to support the principle that the voters of a state can change the allocation of a state's electoral votes through a constitutionally sanctioned initiative—or, in other words, that the Constitution does not give the legislature a monopoly in this field. It follows then that the Colorado ballot measure—if it is reviewed by the Supreme Court—is likely to be upheld by a majority of the justices, at least on these particular grounds.

A far more promising line of argument is to challenge the retroactive application of the measure to the present election. The contest underway in Colorado is proceeding on the assumption that electoral votes will be allocated on a "winner take all" basis. That will be the law in force on November 2; and there is a strong legal presumption that a state's electoral votes are to be allocated according to the rules in effect prior to Election Day.

This is more than a presumption, since it is spelled out clearly in the federal election law governing the counting of disputed electoral votes. Following the Hayes-Tilden election in 1876, in which the two parties fought over rival electoral slates from several southern states, the Congress tried to codify the rules under which such disputes might be resolved. The result was the Electoral Count Act of 1887, the main provisions of which (with minor adjustments) remain in force today. A key provision holds that a certified slate of electors from a state will be regarded as "conclusive" by the Congress if the slate is chosen "by laws enacted prior to the day fixed for the appointment of electors (i.e., election day)." Conversely, electors chosen under laws or rules adopted on or after Election Day are vulnerable to challenge in the Congress. In addition, because in our era the judicial branch has become involved in these controversies, such electors may be challenged in the courts as well.

It thus appears that electors chosen according to Colorado's ballot initiative will be vulnerable to challenge under the Electoral Count Act, since such electors (or at least some of them) will not have been chosen according to laws enacted prior to Election Day.

The U.S. Supreme Court cited this section of the act in the Florida litigation, but in the end the justices disagreed as to whether the Florida Supreme Court had changed the rules after the fact when it intervened to order manual

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recounts. The liberal justices held that the Florida court had not changed the legislative scheme for choosing electors—and even if it had, the arena for settling the issue was the U.S. Congress, which has the authority to accept or reject slates of electors, and not the federal courts. In any case, the justices did agree that a change in the rules on or after Election Day would leave a state's electors open to challenge.

Under federal law, however, it is up to the governor to give final certification of a state's slate of electors, and to transmit that certification to the archivist of the United States as soon as the electors have been determined. Governor Owens, therefore, might refuse certification of the electors as directed by the ballot proposition, on the grounds that those electors will be vulnerable to challenge in the courts and in the Congress; and he could, to guarantee his state's full participation in the Electoral College, insist on certifying a slate of electors chosen according to the "winner-take-all" formula in place on Election Day. This, then, would cause the losing candidate to bring suit before the Colorado Supreme Court; and the losing party in that litigation would appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. Thus the Florida imbroglio would be played out again—assuming, that is, the election is close enough to warrant it.

Since the Colorado gambit appears to be legal so long as it is applied prospectively and not retroactively, it is worth thinking about its broader implications as a precedent for future partisan maneuvering. Does it promise a future advantage to either of the parties?

It is clear that this gambit is one that works to the advantage of the minority party in a given state—since the point is to gain some electoral votes in states where a party cannot win a majority. It would be difficult to pass such a proposal in a legislature, since the majority party would presumably have both the desire and the numbers to block it. Legislators, in addition, are likely to see the proportional division of electoral votes as a reform that would weaken their state's position in the Electoral College—and reduce the attention given to it by presidential candidates. This means that this tactic can only be made to work in states that permit voter initiatives of the kind currently on the ballot in Colorado.

There are now 18 states that permit direct citizen initiatives to approve statutes or constitutional amendments. Several are reasonably competitive states—Florida, Missouri, Nevada, Arkansas, Oregon, and Ohio—and thus do not provide opportunities for clear partisan advantage from a Colorado-type initiative (since the sponsoring party might well win the state, and thus has an interest in preserving "winner take all"). At least 9 states are solidly Republican—Colorado (with its 9 electoral votes), Arizona (10), Idaho (4), Montana (3), Nebraska (5), North Dakota (3), South Dakota (3), Oklahoma (7), and Utah (5)—with a total of 49 electoral votes. As a practical matter, Democrats probably would not deem it worth their while to sponsor expensive initiatives in all of these small states in order to pick up a handful of electoral votes here and there.

There are, however, three solidly Democratic states that permit citizen initiatives, and all of them are large: California, with 55 electoral votes, by far the largest haul in the nation; Michigan with 17; and Washington with 11. California would be a choice target for Republicans, given the number of electoral votes at stake, the fact that it is a safely Democratic state in presidential elections, and also that its voters by now are used to ballot initiatives, having recently replaced a governor by that method.

In the 2000 election, George Bush lost California by more than 1.2 million votes, but still carried about 42 percent of the popular vote. Polls now suggest he is likely to take about the same percentage in this year's election, and perhaps increase his share to 45 percent, though Kerry will still easily carry the state. Bush's total, however, under the proportional formula being considered in Colorado, would yield him between 23 and 25 electoral votes in California—a bonanza equal in size to the electoral vote of the fifth largest state, and larger than several current battleground states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Wisconsin. As a political matter, Democratic candidates for president would face a challenging task if they had to give up 23 to 25 electoral votes in California, and perhaps another dozen or so in Michigan and Washington, because they would then have to make up those votes in other states in the South and border regions that are far less hospitable to the liberal candidates that usually emerge from the Democratic nominating process. A change in the allocation of the electoral vote in California along the lines of the Colorado proposal would thus provoke much soul-searching in Democratic ranks about the representativeness of its nominating process.

As it would play out nationally, then, the Colorado gambit appears to be a losing proposition for the Democrats, whose candidates rely heavily on those 55 electoral votes from the state of California. In view of the Colorado precedent, Republicans might move to place a similar initiative on the ballot in California, and perhaps in Michigan and Washington as well, before the next presidential election.

It seems the Democrats may have outsmarted themselves again, as they have in the past in areas from campaign finance reform to minority-controlled congressional districts. By rigging the rules for what they thought was their immediate political advantage, they have often succeeded instead in harming themselves. ♦

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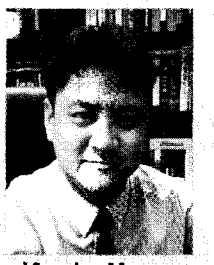

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CORBIS

The Myth of the Catholic Voter

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

There's much to be said about American Catholic voters today, which is probably why so much is *being* said about them. The average citizen might be forgiven for thinking we've returned to the time of Jack Kennedy, when Catholics rose up to claim the presidency for the first time—or maybe to the era of the nineteenth-century Know-Nothings, when Catholics seemed a stain of Irish ignorance and Italian superstition spreading across the land. All this year, the nation's media have been obsessed with the Catholic vote, the Catholic bishops, and the Catholic influence on the November presidential election.

So, for example, early in the campaign, America's newspapers—a group of publications not famous for their interest or competence in the delicacies of scholastic theology—ran article after article on the complicated pastoral question of whether Catholic bishops should refuse communion to politicians who support abortion.

And the topic is still around at the end of the race. During the second presidential debate, John Kerry explicitly mentioned his Catholicism. He used to be "an altar boy," he pointed out in a boast that hasn't been heard in American politics for some time. Things got a little peculiar when Kerry went on to use this mention of his boyhood Catholicism to explain both why he is personally opposed to abortion and why he supports public funding for it, but the point remains: Even the candidates are convinced there's Catholic pressure on the election that must be either exploited or calmed down.

The American Catholic Voter
Two Hundred Years of Political Impact
by George Marlin
St. Augustine's, 420 pp., $30

Exploited seems the choice of the moment. "Never before have so many bishops so explicitly warned Catholics so close to an election that to vote a certain way was to commit a sin," the *New York Times* darkly warned this month. It was a statement about as historically inaccurate as things are allowed to get before even copy editors roll their eyes in disbelief. Does the *Times* know nothing of the elections of, say, the 1840s—or Al Smith's campaign in 1928 or John Kennedy's in 1960, for that matter?

But the line is typical of the chattering class's sense that Catholicism is somehow what's roiling the presidential race, and that warnings about malignant Catholic influence are necessary to reinspire the anti-Bush electoral base. The candidate of that base happens to be a Catholic, of course, and in the tangle by which left-wing anti-Catholics ended up with a Catholic candidate to oppose a Born-Again Protestant who once gave a speech at the right-wing anti-Catholic Bob Jones University, we

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have a superb instance of just how difficult to navigate the intersection of American politics and American religion can be. The *Times* has run three more pieces about Catholic politics on its op-ed pages in the last month, including one, to the newspaper's credit, by Denver's Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, responding to the attacks of the previous articles.

Meanwhile, we've had Catholic voter websites from the Republicans' *KerryWrongForCatholics.com* to the Democrats' run of nearly identically named sites: *KerryCatholics.com*, *CatholicsForKerry04.org*, and *CatholicsForKerry.net*. We've seen rival voter guides battling each other in the parishes, the liberal *National Catholic Reporter* and the *New York Times* gleefully exposing the sexual transgressions of the Bush-supporting editor of the conservative Catholic magazine *Crisis*, and a seemingly endless parade of polls about Catholics from Zogby to Gallup to the Pew Forum.

George Marlin's new book, *The American Catholic Voter*, is the most significant recent publication on the subject. As a historical study, the volume is a political junkie's dream, collecting in four hundred well-written pages a quick but solid analysis of every important Catholic moment in American political history, from the impact of the Carroll family of Maryland during the 1770s, to the Democratic party's brilliant memorandum on the electability of Catholic politicians in the 1950s, and down to our own peculiar situation in the midst of the 2004 presidential campaign. Little-known anecdotes, helpful statistics, and an excellent sense of the flow of American politics over the last two hundred and fifty years combine in Marlin's superb book to show that the Catholic vote in America remains . . . um, well, maybe just remains. I can't for the life of me figure out what it all proves.

To read much in Catholic political commentary is to be told that there really are distinctive Catholic voters out there in America. These voters are strong on social justice and squishy on the war in Iraq. They are unambiguously opposed to abortion, but they recognize that a reverence for life requires contemplation of other issues, particularly the death penalty. They can always come up with a fitting quotation from St. Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life* when they have to, and they've read most of Graham Greene's novels. They're Irish, they went to Jesuit schools, and every one of them has a sister or a cousin who was a Maryknoll nun until she resigned from the convent in 1979 and began to teach women's studies at a college in upstate New York.

These Catholic voters have been uneasily registered Democrats since they were in their cradles, and they remember with wryly embarrassed nostalgia the enormous success of the corrupt Catholic Democratic machine politics of James Michael Curley in Boston and Tammany Hall's Boss Murphy in New York.

When Ted Kennedy said in 1996 that he remembered "'Help Wanted' signs in stores when I was growing up saying 'No Irish Need Apply'"—despite the fact that he was born to wealth in 1932—it mostly proved just how long an urban legend can last. But all these Catholic voters do genuinely have a sense of themselves as something of the underdog in American public life. They remember why Catholics had to build their own social institutions—schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and all the rest—and they remember that these institutions were constucted not with dollars from millionaires but with pennies and nickels from women who spent their days on their knees scrubbing floors for the Protestant upper classes.

American Catholic voters are liberal about government in a way no economic or evangelical conservative can understand, and conservative about morals in a way no socialist or New Age liberal can grasp. They were pro-labor and anti-Communist when both those things really counted, and they remain committed to the possibility of applying the intellectual and ethical fruits of their faith to the messy life of politics.

One further thing needs to be said about these Catholic voters: They don't actually exist. Maybe they never did, at least in the ideal type sketched by Catholic political writers, but certainly we haven't seen many of them since the 1950s. Indeed, by every statistical measure, Catholics are indistinguishable from other voters in the American political scene.

Not that you could glean this from the newspapers. Last week, joining the obsession with Catholicism, the *Wall Street Journal* declared, "If you are looking for a good political indicator, look no further than America's Catholics. The Catholic vote has gone to the popular winner in every presidential election since 1972." You might as well say the *American* vote has gone to the popular winner since 1972. Far from proving the importance of the Catholic vote, the *Wall Street Journal* conveyed the hidden truth: Catholics vote like everybody else, and they live like everybody else. Their distinctive urban political stance long ago disappeared—as everyone's eventually does—in the crabgrass frontier of suburbia.

The statistics gathered by George Marlin in *The American Catholic Voter*, particularly when combined with the QEV Analytics work that Steven Wagner did for *Crisis* magazine a few years ago and polling this spring from the Pew Forum, are unambiguous, though most of the pollsters squirm and wriggle to explain the conclusion away.

So, for instance, the Pew statistics show Catholics tracking at 41 percent Republican to 44 percent Democrat, a figure easily in line with the national average of 38 percent Republican to 42 percent Democrat, particularly when you remove from the calculation the overwhelmingly Protestant and Democratic African Americans—who vote as an old-fashioned ethnic group, the way the Irish used to do.

The usual device for slicing the data to deny this conclusion is to point out a distinction between Mass-attending Catholics and what used to be called "cultural Catholics" or "smorgasbord Catholics." Analyzing the results of an August 10 poll, the Gallup pollsters wrote, "Comprising about 25 percent of the population, Catholics have been a key swing group in U.S. presidential elections for the past three decades.

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Currently, Catholic voters overall show a preference for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry and have done so since late May, after tending to support President George W. Bush earlier in the year."

And yet, in mid-October, the Catholic-convert Robert Novak used his nationally syndicated column to point out a drift of Catholics back to Bush—which all sounds exactly like the nation in general: Bush strongly in the lead early in the year, Kerry then slightly in the lead until August, Bush surging well ahead in September, Kerry gaining after the debates, Bush returning to a slight lead by the end of October. If that's how Catholics are polling, what distinguishes them from the rest of America?

Polls from the Barna Research Group had Kerry leading Bush among Catholics 48 to 43 percent in May, and down among Catholics 36 to 53 percent at the end of September. Both those results seem exaggerated—outliers when compared with other polls (although a Pew poll from the same week had Kerry down 39 to 49 percent among white Catholic registered voters). In their drift, however, the figures do not prove the "seismic shift" Barna claimed to find in the Catholic vote. They merely track the general movement in the national polls. Catholic voters followed the national averages in 2000, favoring Gore over Bush by a slim 48.4 to 47.9 percent, and little seems to have changed.

But the Gallup analysis went on to make a now commonplace distinction: "Catholics themselves are divided in their candidate support, as those who attend church on a weekly basis tend to support Bush, while those who attend church less often—especially those who rarely attend—show stronger support for Kerry."

This surely seems right. When I spoke to him last week, Steven Wagner pointed out that almost no other Americans—not even non-practicing Jews—continue to identify themselves by religion after they've stopped practicing their religion. And if we separate out those who actually go to Mass once a week or more from those who tell pollsters that they're Catholic, when what they actually mean is that their grandmothers were Irish, we appear to have a solid Catholic voting bloc left over.

This Mass-attending group have shown since 1960, in Wagner's analysis, a willingness to call themselves Republicans and identify themselves as conservative—neither of which was remotely true, as Marlin points out, in 1888 or 1928 or 1960. And this, indeed, does seem a serious change (although no more of one, perhaps, than that which saw active mainline Protestants outside the South shift their allegiance in the same period from the Republicans to the Democrats).

But it is a shift only to the place where the rest of the nation is. The sum of all Catholic voters, active and inactive alike, is indistinguishable from the general population of American voters. And the Catholic voters who go to church once a week or more are indistinguishable from the population of all American voters who go to church once a week or more.

The Pew data consistently show active Catholics falling precisely between active evangelicals and active mainline Protestants in their views and voting patterns. On a few issues—abortion, a public role for religion, and school vouchers—Catholics more closely track evangelicals. On a few other issues—government spending and welfare, in particular—Catholics tend to match mainline Protestants.

But a presidential election, narrowed down to two candidates, limits the opportunities to express these slight differences. And when you add up the 26 percent of the population who are active evangelicals, the 16 percent who are active mainline Protestants, and the 17 percent who are active Catholics—and throw in the active Latino Catholics (4.5 percent of the population and 61 percent Democrat) and actively Protestant African Americans (9.6 percent of the population and 71 percent Democrat)—you find that you hardly need to calculate the Catholic vote at all.

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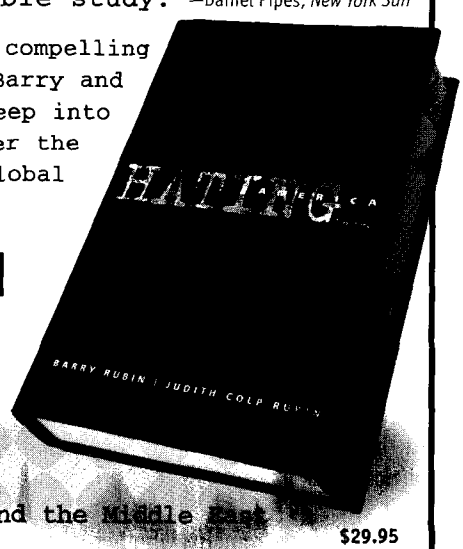

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By party affiliation, religiously active Americans are 42 percent Republican and 44 percent Democrat (in averages calculated from the Pew data), which precisely matches the figures for Catholic party identification. By likely vote in the 2004 presidential election (this is a clearly corrupt figure I arrived at by averaging diverse and incommensurate polls, but it may be helpful for pointing out the basic fact) active Catholics seem to be supporting Bush over Kerry by around 49 to 40 percent, which mirrors the results for all religiously active Christians in America.

What all this means is that there is no purely Catholic vote in America today. And if, with this in mind, we look back at the history Marlin gathers in *The American Catholic Voter*, we begin to sense that there may *never have been* a Catholic electoral identity. Catholics voted for Catholic candidates not out of ideology but out of ethnic solidarity. The urban analyst Fred Siegel insisted, in a phone interview a few weeks ago, that the long Catholic presence in America's East Coast cities profoundly influenced—and continues to influence—the politics of places like Philadelphia, Boston, and New York City. And it may well be true. But however strong, the effect seems secondary.

Catholics delivered solid voting blocs, usually for Democrats, not because they were Catholic believers but because their mothers were Irish, Italian, Slavic, German, and Polish Catholics, and because only in ethnic solidarity could they force their way into an unwelcoming American political scene. Their religious belief may have had real political effects, but it wasn't the cause, and when the need for ethnic solidarity began to slip away during the 1950s and 1960s—Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* is the great fictional treatment of this moment—so did the Catholic identity in American politics.

The question remains whether there *should* be a distinctly Catholic political identity. A few years ago, for my sins, I attended a conference at Georgetown University about the state of Catholicism in America.

The opening debate between the *New York Times*'s Peter Steinfels and *First Things* editor Richard John Neuhaus was instructive about the clash between liberal and conservative Catholics—although no divisions in contemporary Catholicism are really as tidy as all that: There still exist remnants of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement who view the liberal Steinfels as an amiable fascist, and communes of Latin Mass advocates who see the conservative Neuhaus as a sentimental socialist, and a host of other tiny Catholic intellectual groups who generally treat American political reality as a poor man's banquet at which they can nibble only a little off others' tables.

Still, the argument between Steinfels and Neuhaus was sufficient to lay out the main differences between the ways Democratic-leaning Catholics and Republican-leaning Catholics view their somewhat depressing situation. It wasn't till the second day's debate, between Michael Novak and Monica Helwig, that a truly palpable gloom settled over the room. For the neoconservative Novak and the feminist Helwig have had this debate so many times, over so many years, that they began to squabble like an old couple locked in a bickering marriage: forgotten occasions suddenly remembered, dead quarrels fanned back to flame, exhausted *casus belli* revived, until we seemed to be back in that strife-torn hall at the 1976 Call to Action conference in Detroit, the low point in post-Vatican II American Catholic unity—nothing learned, nothing gained, nothing advanced in more than twenty-five years.

The pope has developed Catholic social thought to such an extent that it fits in our tired political categories the way a tornado fits in a teacup.

That feeling was a little unfair to Helwig, and very unfair to Novak, who has done important work on religion, capitalism, and human rights over the long years since Detroit. Even more, the feeling was unfair to Pope John Paul II, and Mother Teresa, and the new *Catechism*, and everything that has changed since the confusion that followed Vatican II.

We have witnessed over the last quarter-century what the papal biographer George Weigel calls "the maturation of Catholic social thought," although that phrase seems slightly wrong—suggesting that, say, Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical on the working classes, *Rerum Novarum*, was a childish production. But Weigel is surely right that Catholic thinking on these topics has turned, in its slow, ponderous way, to accept the social goods of the modern world and to present clear arguments about how they might be turned to a greater good.

With his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II wrote what is by any objective standard the most *pro*-American document ever to come out of Rome, embracing the social possibilities of democratic capitalism. With his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, he wrote what is by any objective standard the most *anti*-American document from Rome, denouncing the "culture of death" that has turned its back on reverence for life. And with the *combination* of these two encyclicals—and the theological and philosophical foundation provided in his other works, from the 1979 *Redemptor Hominis* to the 2003 *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*—the pope has developed Catholic social thought to such an extent that it fits in those tired political categories the way a tornado fits in a teacup.

Unfortunately, you'd hardly know it from the manner in which Catholicism plays on the American public scene. In some ways, there has never been a time when Catholic phrasings and forms of thought have so dominated our political discussions. Isn't there something peculiar when even the most hard-nosed advocates of welfare reform cast their arguments in terms of what they claim will help the poor climb out of poverty? Nobody seems to

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argue these days the old, anti-Catholic Social Darwinist line that the possibility of social winners requires the existence of social losers.

For that matter, isn't there something odd when the common liberal accusation against conservatives—as hypocrites who are against abortion and for the death penalty—simply accepts the Catholic linking of these topics?

And isn't there something curious, something new in American discourse, when the public arguments about the preparation for war in Iraq were conducted entirely in terms of just-war theory? That used to be thought something eccentric and parochial that Catholics had to do to convince themselves to participate in the battles of non-Catholic countries. Now it's how most of America talks about war.

In other ways, however, there has never been a time when Catholicism mattered less in America. In 1960, Mass-attending Catholics gave John Kennedy 87 percent of their vote, but Catholics haven't been able to achieve that kind of electoral unity for a long time. And as their ability to deliver votes declined—or, at least, as political analysts' belief in the Catholic vote declined (since Marlin demonstrates that Catholics were never quite as monolithic as popular imagination supposes them)—the bishops have had for many years only Catholicism's intellectual and moral prestige with which to try to persuade politicians.

The intellectual terms triumphed to a surprising degree. But the moral authority vanished overnight in the priest pedophilia scandals. On December 1, 2001, the Catholic Church was at the front of the fight against cloning. Two months later, by February 1, 2002, the Catholic Church had essentially disappeared from the battle. In the middle of the campaign to force Tom Daschle, then majority leader, to allow an anti-cloning bill to come to the floor of the Senate, one major metropolitan bishop told me he didn't dare lobby his senators on the issue—for fear they would answer, "Who the hell are you to lecture me on a moral issue?" and rupture their relationship forever.

Twenty-five years of the prestige built up by John Paul II and Mother Teresa swirled away in an instant. And at every moment since, whenever the bishops have tried to intrude on public affairs, there has been someone ready to remind us of their sins. When Denver's Archbishop Charles Chaput demanded this October that Catholics vote against pro-abortion politicians, Maureen Dowd immediately used her column in the *New York Times* to denounce "the shepherds of a Church whose hierarchy bungled the molestation and rape of so many young boys by tolerating it, covering it up, enabling it, excusing it, and paying hush money" for daring to debate "whether John Kerry should be allowed to receive communion."

Dowd is a good example of the kind of American Catholic—left and right alike, although mostly middle-left—whose application of Catholic thought to political reality is still mired in the 1970s. Or perhaps I mean this the other way around: There are a number of American Catholic writers whose current political views seek justification and support in decades-old Catholic categories; the issues change from year to year, but the analysis always treads the same, old, muddy ground.

On October 11, for instance, Mark Roche, a dean at Notre Dame, was granted space in the *New York Times* to claim, "History will judge our society's support of abortion in much the same way we view earlier generations' support of torture and slavery." But Roche went on to extend this astonishing (for the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*) claim into an argument that Catholics ought to vote for John Kerry, the senator with possibly the worst record on pro-life issues in American politics, because . . . well, it hardly seems worth the bother of rehearsing the becauses.

If at any time since 1976 you've had the misfortune to attend a Catholic seminar, or read a statement from the American Catholic bishops' conference, or listen to Mario Cuomo speak, you know that Roche would insist that the "death penalty, universal health care, and environmental protection" form equal parts of a seamless garment of life with abortion; you've heard that conservatives are

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right on only one Catholic issue while liberals are right on all the rest; and you've been instructed that only the Democrats can be trusted to care for the poor, because Republicans are rats on all the deepest "socioeconomic" issues: "equitable taxes and greater integration into the world community," to cite a pair of Roche's overly familiar examples.

One can answer all this, of course. Princeton's Robert George and Notre Dame's Gerald Bradley did a good job of rebuking Dean Roche on the *National Review* website, for instance. But in every attempt to answer, there is a temptation—perhaps even a necessity—to be sucked back down into the terms of the 1970s one more time.

Catholics are hardly unique in this. To a large degree it is our universal condition: All of America's social argument is still caught in the 1970s. The marchers in peace parades are redolent of Vietnam activism circa 1972—in both how they see the war in Iraq and how they see themselves. At a rally in 2003, Hunter S. Thompson declared, "I've become almost homesick for the smell of tear gas," and the gathered antiwar crowd erupted in cheers. The fact that they are not actually being teargassed only makes the nostalgia easier.

For that matter, the 1973 *Roe* v. *Wade* decision still grinds us through its wheels. It's only a slight exaggeration to say that *everything* in American politics has to do with abortion. The categories of the 1970s have only hardened with time. You might have expected Catholics to exercise some leavening influence within the Democratic party, but they've never really managed it. The pro-life position has waxed and waned in the Republican party, falling in 1992 and 1996, and rising in 2000, but the Democrats have become—at least since the Clintons banned Pennsylvania's pro-life Democratic governor Robert Casey from the dais at the 1992 convention—entirely the party of support for abortion.

A surprisingly consistent history of Democratic politicians over the last three decades has been their gradual trading of pro-life positions in exchange for national prominence. Think of Al Gore and Richard Gephardt and Jesse Jackson and a parade of others, culminating in the hapless Dennis Kucinich, whose first act even as a protest presidential candidate with no real chance in the Democratic primaries last year was to renounce his previously staunch antiabortion position. In 1978, Tom Daschle had the nuns who taught him in grade school write a letter to voters in South Dakota swearing he would always fight against abortion. By 2002, he was penning fundraising letters for NARAL and giving fundraising talks for EMILY's List.

Catholics form the largest religious denomination among elected officials in America, but the Church's pro-life agenda would be more successfully advanced if those Catholic officeholders were all replaced tomorrow by Mormons or Muslims. In 2003, a newspaper advertisement designated twelve influential Democratic senators—Kennedy, Harkin, Kerry, Daschle, Dodd, Collins, Reed, Murray, Landrieu, Leahy, Mikulski, and Biden—as the "deadly dozen": openly pro-abortion Catholics.

Political analysis, like pastoral teaching, needs to begin with the truth: The Catholic voter is, alas, a myth.

And yet, the failure to maintain a distinctively Catholic presence in the Democratic party goes back much further. Such figures as Sargent and Eunice Shriver, Richard Daley, Eugene McCarthy, and Daniel Moynihan were not nobodies in their party; they were grown-ups, and they could have resisted. But they let it slide. They let Mario Cuomo's formulation of "personally opposed but publicly supportive" become the abortion mantra of Catholic Democrats, and they allowed a distinct Catholic position in the party to close around them.

In 1998, during the early days of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, it looked for a moment as though there would be an identifiably Catholic reaction. In the *National Journal*, William Powers suggested a Catholic "media mafia" was out to get the president. From Eric Alterman's denunciation of "moral absolutism" in the *Nation* to the anti-Clinton schadenfreude of the *American Spectator*, the reactions to Clinton's behavior broke fairly solidly along party lines—except, Powers noted, among a set of generally liberal Catholic television and newspaper commentators.

Maureen Dowd, Michael Kelly, and Chris Matthews were perhaps the most censorious. But also in the hunt were Tim Russert, Mary McGrory, Mark Shields, Cokie Roberts, and even Gary Wills. And yet, by the time the impeachment hearings rolled around, nearly all these figures—Maureen Dowd, most visibly—had shifted back to the standard party line of defending the president. The question of Clinton's behavior got translated into a culture-wars issue, and the options narrowed to business as usual.

Add it all up, and it's hard to see *any* place that Catholicism makes a difference in American political life. In the ballots Catholic voters cast, in the positions Catholic politicians take, in the pieces Catholic writers publish—in what Catholics do, and what they fail to do—they are ordinary Republicans and Democrats; their faith seems invisible. They are utterly indistinguishable from the general run of citizens. In his famous talk to Protestant ministers in Houston during the 1960 campaign, John Kennedy said he didn't want to be a Catholic president; he wanted instead to be a president who happened to be Catholic. Catholicism in America seems to have since become entirely a Church of little John Kennedys.

So why is everyone from the *New York Times* to the Republican National Committee so worked up about it all? The answer in part derives from the very fact that makes active Catholics invisible among the general population

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of active Christians in America: Like African Americans today, Catholics were once an ethnic group with strongly conservative social feelings who could nonetheless be counted upon to deny much of their vote to conservatives. Catholics are *supposed* to be Democrats—some of the most myth-inspiring figures of American political history demand it—and if their votes are the same as the evangelicals', then the Democrats have lost an ethnic group they once took for granted, and they must contend for Catholics' votes in the ideological battles of the day.

More, the growing unity of traditionalist Catholics and antimodernist evangelicals represents a profound change in American political reality. This really is a seismic shift. Catholics have always tended to exaggerate a little the extent to which they were oppressed by the mainstream culture when they arrived in America, but the fact remains that a minor but consistent motor of American history has been the antagonism of Protestants for Catholics. Among the religiously casual, that antagonism gradually disappeared in the impossibility of distinguishing religiously one suburbanite from another. And among the religiously serious, the old, sweated hatreds vanished in the common cause made in the fight against abortion since the 1970s and a shared perception among the religious of all kinds that the elite culture despises them equally.

In other words, something very strange has happened in the United States. We might call it the emergence of "mere religion," after C.S. Lewis's phrase for shared Christian belief, "mere Christianity." There has appeared, in one of the most unlikely developments in American cultural history, a horizontal unity that seems to cut across the vertical divisions of the old jarring sects. A Presbyterian, say, with strongly orthodox views now typically feels more solidarity with an orthodox Lutheran or Catholic or even Jew than he does with the non-orthodox of his own denomination.

The Republicans were slow to grasp this fact—as George W. Bush's visit to the old-fashionedly anti-Catholic Bob Jones University during the 2000 Republican primaries, and his apparent reliance on the ex-Texas evangelical Deal Hudson for Catholic outreach both proved. The GOP was gaining an increasing number of Catholic votes from the 1950s on. Marlin traces, in particular, the ethnic Catholic votes against McGovern in 1972 and for Reagan in 1980. But even the Reaganite Republican activists were badly tone-deaf about Catholic language, and they couldn't be trusted to speak to even friendly Catholic audiences without one verbal gaffe or another.

Bit by bit, however, the Republicans have managed to form a Catholic vocabulary. Such Catholic politicians as William Simon, Henry Hyde, and Rick Santorum helped give the Republicans a *nihil obstat*, as did the surprisingly successful attempts of such Catholic neoconservatives as Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and George Weigel to educate evangelicals in how to speak Catholic.

It used to be that no Democrat needed to learn this stuff; they spoke it from the time they first started hanging around the alderman's office as teenagers. Sargent Shriver, Eugene McCarthy, and Bobby Kennedy all carried around with them a tame Catholic intellectual to help them thicken their speeches with Vaticanized references.

But in the long years since, the Democrats have forgotten how to talk this language. It isn't just that every national Democrat has to perform an impossible squiggle on abortion when talking to practicing Catholics. Even the Catholics among Democratic politicians can't seem to remember how it goes. Asked by a reporter about his Catholic detractors during Holy Week this year, Kerry replied,

> Are they the same legislators who vote for the death penalty, which is in contravention of Catholic teaching?... I'm not a Church spokesman. I'm a legislator running for president. My oath is to uphold the Constitution of the United States in my public life. My oath privately between me and God was defined in the Catholic Church by Pius XXIII and Pope Paul VI in the Vatican II, which allows for freedom of conscience for Catholics with respect to these choices, and that is exactly where I am. And it is separate. Our Constitution separates church and state, and they should be reminded of that.

Even the *New York Times* felt it necessary to gloss this with the note: "Mr. Kerry apparently meant John XXIII, as there is no Pius XXIII." And the tone-deafness of saying "the Vatican II" for Vatican II, like Kerry's garbled talking points of forty years' worth of answers from Catholic politicians to similar questions, only managed to make even his own Catholic supporters cringe.

The fact that Catholic voters are invisible feels wrong to me, somehow—a theological error, a philosophical mistake. The uniqueness of the Catholic vote *wants* to be true, if only because American history and intellectual consistency alike seem to demand that being Catholic make a difference in how one behaves in the public square.

But accurate political analysis, like well-directed pastoral teaching, needs to begin with the truth: The Catholic voter is, alas, a myth. ♦

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Knopf

Anthony Hecht, 1923-2004

Anthony Hecht, one of the most elegant and harrowing of American poets, died on October 20 at the age of eighty-one. In an era of lackluster poets, he was uncompromising in his devotion to beauty—a devotion that took forms of such complexity and range, it won him nearly every major award short of the Nobel Prize.

Born in New York in 1923, Hecht was the son of a Jewish businessman whose erratic fortunes produced in the boy at an early age a sense of life's precariousness. This sense, which runs through all nine of Hecht's volumes of poetry, was increased by his experience as a young soldier in World War II. Overseas with the 97th Infantry, Hecht saw combat in France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia, participating in the liberation of the concentration camp at Flossenburg just days after the execution of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. While only a handful of Hecht's poems—including "More Light! More Light!" and "The Book of Yolek"—deal directly with the war, the experience lies beneath everything he wrote, even the later poems of grateful love for his wife, Helen.

Steeped in the literature of the past, Hecht was no imitator but an original voice, both brutal and mordantly funny, matching conscious artifice to an enlarged vision of modern life. His long monologue in the voice of a disturbed ex-soldier, "The Venetian Vespers," pits the most exquisite descriptive sensibility against an array of horrors. Another narrative, "The Short End," builds from a surprising familiarity with the dross of American life to a boozy apocalypse. Hecht's narrative gifts were immense, and he put them to use as well in shorter ironic poems like "The Dover Bitch" and "The Ghost in the Martini." Blank verse meditations like "Green: An Epistle" and "Apprehensions" question one of the staples of contemporary poetry, autobiographical subject matter: *An old song of comparative innocence, / Until one learns to read between the lines.*

The style was in many ways the man. I first met Tony Hecht in the early 1980s when I was an aspiring writer in Rochester, New York. I had read Hecht's books in the public library there, especially his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Hard Hours* (1967) with its unflinching poems, some of them edged with humor. In a poem about a school friend's madness, "Third Avenue in Sunlight," Hecht allowed his speaker an oblique confession of fellowship:

Daily the prowling sunlight whets its knife
Along the sidewalk. We almost never meet.
In the Rembrandt dark he lifts his amber life.
My bar is somewhat further down the street.

Hecht had seen terrible things but would not succumb to them, and he became one of my heroes among modern poets. When he agreed to meet me in his home and talk about the writing life, I was thrilled and terrified.

Those of us who met Tony only after he had become an established eminence found him formidable. When I entered graduate school at the University of Rochester in 1984, I studied modern poetry with him and attended a few dinners and parties in his home, where Helen was both gracious hostess and heavenly cook. But I held the poet in such esteem that I could never relax around him, and only glimpsed the irreverent humor his older friends, such as W.S. Merwin and Richard Wilbur, would report.

David Mason is a writer and teacher in Colorado and the author, most recently, of the poetry collection Arrivals.

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When I wrote a dissertation on W.H. Auden, a poet Tony had known and about whom he would write his own critical study, *The Hidden Law* (1993), I asked Tony to be one of my directors because I knew he would be rigorous. He was. Though he had moved on to Georgetown University in 1985, he co-directed my work by correspondence, sending detailed and erudite letters with gratifying promptness.

Tony performed a similar function for many other scholars and writers. He was a steadfast and voluminous correspondent with such poets as B.H. Fairchild, Dana Gioia, R.S. Gwynn, Brad Leithauser, Timothy Murphy, Mary Jo Salter, Norman Williams, and Greg Williamson. His strictness as a teacher was far outweighed by his generosity to the many different talents he admired.

It was after the war and the failure of his first marriage (his wife left the country with their sons) that Tony found unexpected happiness with Helen D'Alessandro. They married in 1971. Evidence of this love can be found in poems such as "Peripeteia" from *Millions of Strange Shadows* (1977) and a very recent work called "Aubade":

If the heart leaps at this usual miracle,
If the music figures its own destiny,
Think how I feel each day lying beside you,
Watching the easy cadences of your breathing
As you lie gilded in the advancing light.

The marriage produced a son, Evan, and provided a stable environment that promoted Tony's late productivity. A poet who at first seemed as parsimonious as Eliot became, like Yeats, prolific at a high level right up to the end. Looking at the body of his work, I can only marvel at the range of characters, forms, moods, and experiences he absorbed into his own magisterial style.

Having studied with John Crowe Ransom and befriended such confessional poets as Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton, Tony was a writer out of the era of New Criticism who took seriously the close reading of canonical authors. But he was also a reader of voracious and catholic tastes who could champion poets as diverse as Charles Simic and Ron Rash. His own exacting essays were collected in *Obbligati* (1986), *On the Laws of the Poetic Art* (1995), and *Melodies Unheard* (2003). But while this work lumped him with so-called "academic poets" and led to some dismissals of his work, Tony's intellect and artistry transcend such categories. He exemplified ambition and accomplishment few of his contemporaries could touch.

In an interview at age seventy-five he was happy to quote George Herbert's "The Flower": *And now in age I bud again, / After so many deaths I live and write*. The fact that this blossoming lasted into his eighties is, like Anthony Hecht himself, one of the astonishments of American letters.

With a poet of such stature, the loss felt by his family and friends is painfully mixed with an immense cultural loss that will be felt whenever we read his great poems and judicious essays. Here is a poet who forged his style against all the currents of his age and never slighted his devotions, yet who came in a late poem called "Spring Break" to a more sanguine view of the world he was leaving:

Meanwhile the elders breathe a grateful sigh;
Vanished are rudeness, arrogance, and noise.
Yet, a week later, what is their reward?
Views of the changeless ocean leave them bored,
And it would be ungenerous to deny
The girls were pretty and the boys were boys.

Here is a poet who grew in warmth and humanity right up to his final days. Who is there left now who can question our presumptions with such ferocity and grace?

—David Mason

Sarabande on Attaining the Age of Seventy-Seven

The harbingers are come. See, see their mark;
White is their colour, and behold my head.

Long gone the smoke-and-pepper childhood smell
Of the smoldering immolation of the year,
Leaf-strewn in scattered grandeur where it fell,
Golden and poxed with frost, tarnished and sere.

And I myself have whitened in the weathers
Of heaped-up Januarys as they bequeath
The annual rings and wrongs that wring my withers,
Sober my thoughts and undermine my teeth.

The dramatis personae of our lives
Dwindle and wizen; familiar boyhood shames,
The tribulations one somehow survives,
Rise smokily from propitiatory flames

Of our forgetfulness until we find
It becomes strangely easy to forgive
Even ourselves with his clouding of the mind,
This cinerous blur and smudge in which we live.

A turn, a glide, a quarter-turn and bow,
The stately dance advances; these are airs
Bone-deep and numbing as I should know by now,
Diminishing the cast, like musical chairs.

—Anthony Hecht

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Not a Parody

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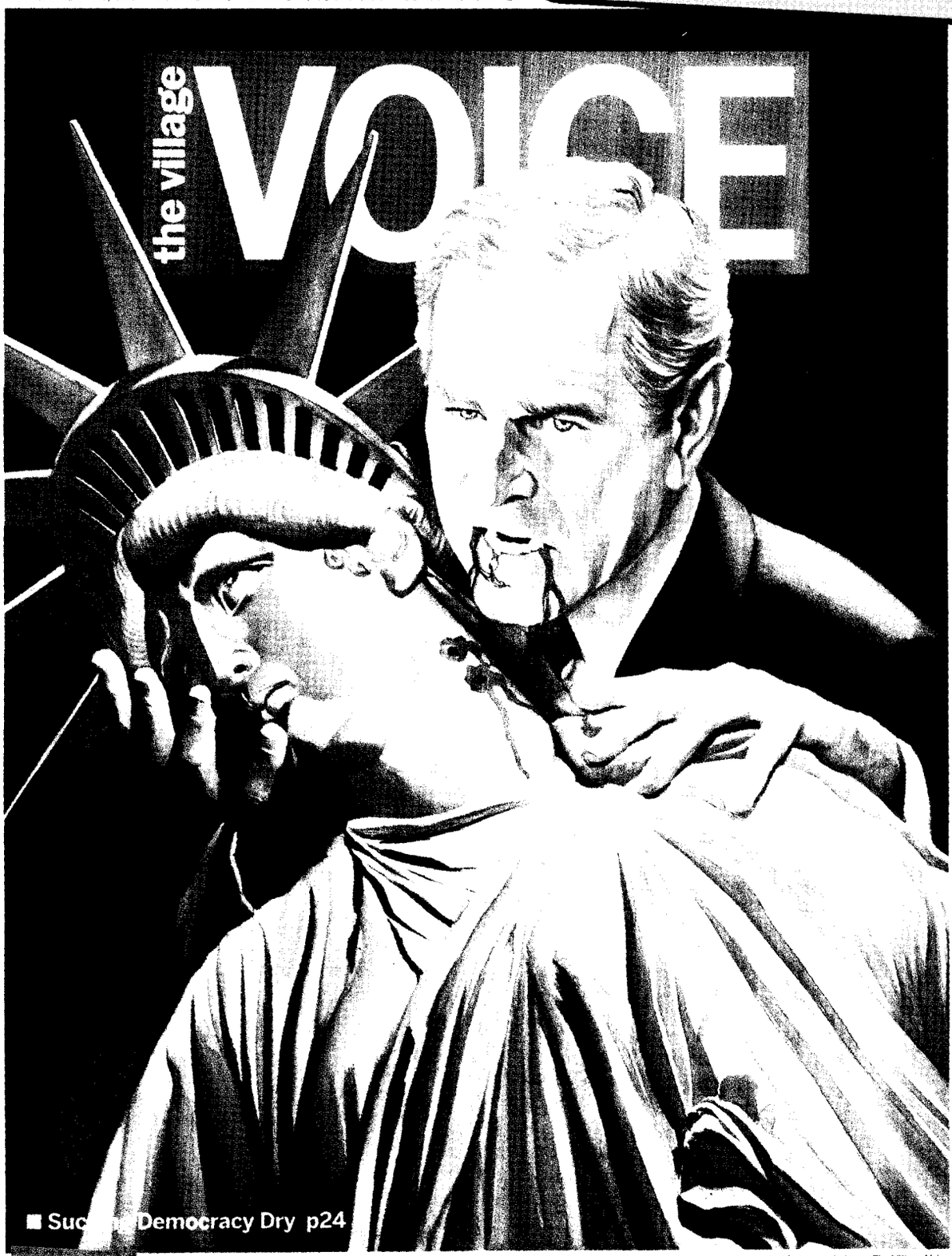

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Chad's Dang[illegible]

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Before Nover ber 2000, few [illegible] knew about chad—hanging dimpled, or pregnant. But as surely as a blue dress and an ill-fitting glove symbolize historic legal cases, chad has come to represent legal wrangling over voting and the presidency in 2000.

Unfortunately chad lives on. No, I'm not referring to the fact that nineteen states will use paper ballots in the 2004 election. Chad's larger and more dangerous legacy is the myth that voting must be uniform and perfect; if not, the courts will become the election arbiters.

The U.S. Constitution makes voting a matter for state legislatures, not federal courts. Article I, Section 4, of the Constitution provides that states will set the place, manner, and time of voting, expressly allowing for state authority and diversity, not federal uniformity, in elections.

But chad's torturous journey through state and federal courts in 2000 opened the floodgates for a host of other legal voting challenges this year. The question chad raised—whether certain balloting methods are improper under the equal protection clause of the Constitution—is now posed in various forms across the country, raising the specter of federal judges overruling state elections and creating national uncertainty.

Provisional ballots—a remedy aimed at some of the 2000 problems—are already being challenged in courts. Are differing state standards for voter identification fair? If a state uses paper ballots, or some untested new voting technology, are its voters' ballots more likely to be lost, or not properly counted, and therefore treated unequally? Some go as far to wonder wh[illegible] renders their vote less equa[illegible] a state strongly favoring one candidate compared with a vote in a battleground state. All these question are fodder for the thousands of new volunteer campaign lawyers and proactive federal judges.

Must election processes be uniform from state to state in order to be fair? The U.S. Constitution clearly answers no, expressly providing for state liberty and diversity in voting methods. Those who would prefer federal uniformity in elections must take that issue first to Congress, which retains a right of oversight in elections, and ultimately to the states themselves to approve a constitutional amendment.

Must voting methods be perfect in order to be fair? Again, the answer must be no. At the moment experts cannot even agree on which methodologies produce acceptable results. Far more work and funding are needed to determine what really improves the voting process, an effort Congress only began with the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

In the end, **we need confidence in our elections and democratic processes far more than we need perfect or uniform voting**. Let the Constitution's allocation of voting methodologies to the states and the efforts of Congress to identify and fund improved balloting processes do their proper work. And let the campaign lawyers and federal judges take an electoral chill pill, allowing the presidency to be settled by processes the Constitution established and the candidates understood and accepted.

—David Davenport

David Davenport is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a distinguished professor of public policy at Pepperdine University.

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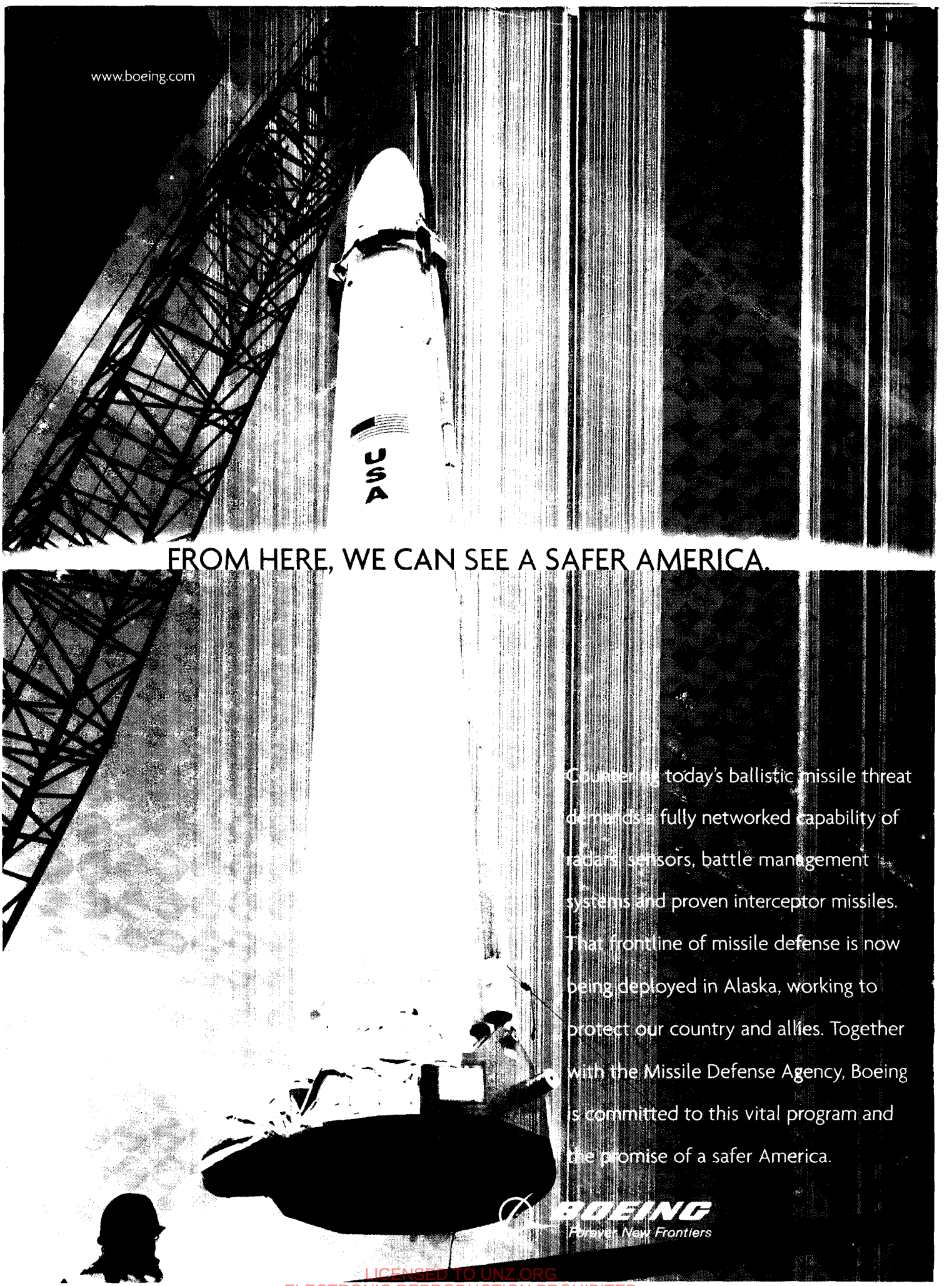

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